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William Hone: Radical Parody and Appropriation in the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere

Bruce Andrew Watson

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1995

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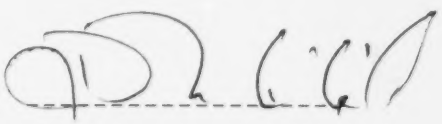

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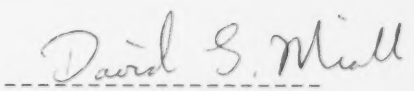

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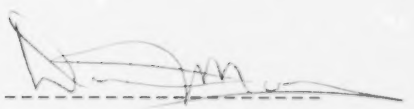

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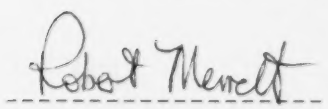

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to situate William Hone (1780-1842), the radical parodist and publisher, in the context of an emerging working-and artisan-class public sphere. Hone's disparate oeuvre, including his trial literature, his weekly Reformist Register, and his early political parodies, is united in a common impulse to appropriate the language and texts of what Hone identified as an oppressive dominant culture. Early radicals saw themselves excluded from the "public sphere" by an hierarchical structure of language which identified subaltern speakers as incompetent public citizens based on their lack of a certain linguistic capital. Hone and his colleagues, then, appropriated, subverted, and imitated the language of their social "superiors" in an attempt to mitigate the exclusiveness of the early nineteenth-century public sphere. Parody, as an appropriative genre, played an essential role in this radical strategy to enfranchise the working and artisan classes as legitimate public citizens.

Acknowledgements:

Thanks to Jim Mulvihill for his patience, and allowing me to act in "The Bald Soprano" this year. Thanks also for his careful, knowledgeable and much appreciated commentary. Thanks to Cara for finding me an original print of "George Cruickshank's Fairy Library" in London. See "Cruickshank, exorbitant expense of" in concluding chapter.

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Introduction:

The Problem of Representation.

"When every caution has been made," says E.P. Thompson, "the outstanding fact of the period between 1790 and 1830 is the formation of 'the working class.'" (Making, 212) When William Hone began publishing in the early part of the nineteenth century the very concept of class was still contested ground, even though the word "class" had its modern connotations by 1772, and the term "working class" was in occasional use by 1815 (Williams, xv). In the four decades that preceded Chartism, writers of all social ranks turned their attention to an apparently emergent class whose politics, aspirations and abilities they either denigrated or propounded. In the journals, political tracts and even poetry of the time, it is possible to trace a discursive history in which the "meanings" of the working class are established through an obstreperous confrontation between the labouring poor, the middle classes and the aristocracy. At the center of this struggle for power and identity was language. It was in language that the subaltern classes saw themselves represented—in the familiar tropes of the day—as "the mob," "la canaille," and "the rabble." It was "proper" language that the poor were lacking when their petitions were turned away from parliament. It was language that the powerful had supposedly used to elicit the unknowing submission of the poor to their rule. By the turn of the century, radical

reformers had created a distinction between the language spoken by the powerful and the language spoken by the disenfranchised multitudes. They adopted strategies to imitate, appropriate and subvert the language of their social "superiors," and in the process arrived at a sense of who they were, and what they might become as a class.

William Hone was born during the Gordon riots on the 3rd of June, 1780, and he died at the age of sixty-two in 1842. For scholars of popular culture, the two dates will be familiar, since they approximately bracket an historical period that has come under intense scrutiny in the last three decades: E.P. Thompson, George Rudé, Raymond Williams, Olivia Smith, Marcus Wood and Jon Klancher[1], have all written studies that identify the last decades of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth century as a transitional period for Britain's lower classes.

In Thompson's now ubiquitous phrase, the working class was "making itself" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The term suggests a fluid population that was forming a common culture in response to economic and political pressures. Lured by the promise of higher and steadier wages and an improved quality of life, farm-workers and rural artisans migrated over the course of more than a century to urban industrial centers (Porter,93). Given this

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[1] The titles of these studies and the dates they encompass are in order as follows: The Making of the English Working Class, 1780-1832; The Crowd in History, 1730-1848; Culture and Society, 1780-1950; The Politics of Language, 1791-1819; Radical Satire and Print Culture, 1790-1822; The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832.

increasing mobility of the English population, it is possible to see the labouring and artisan populations of Britain's urban centers as the legacy of a culture that had been at some point "unmade" by urbanization. The working class emerged from a population that could no longer find itself reflected in the traditions and customs of an antecedent rural culture. In fact, working-class urbanites of the 1830's decried that rural culture wherever it was still evident[2], and partly based their own identity on having superseded an outmoded way of life. Thus, there emerged in Britain's urban centers a large plebeian and "middling class" populace whose cultural and class identity seemed no longer to be stable.

Representations of this population in the literature and political rhetoric of the mid-to-late eighteenth century revealed a deep distrust of its overwhelming size and complexity, a complexity that fostered denigrating generalizations about the "lower orders," "the mob," "la canaille," or the "swinish multitude" (Klancher, 84). The nascent working class seemed to be a population that was in every sense unrepresentable, either politically or discursively. Even amongst the members of the "lower orders," self-representation tended to hearken back to a simpler time, and eighteenth century political literature is replete with rural, not urban, imagery. Thomas Spence, for instance, who

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[2] Peasant traditions and ceremonies, for instance, were frequently ridiculed. Charles Lamb's introductory poem to Hone's Every-Day Book is representative of a sentiment that recurrs throughout: "Our father's mummeries we well-pleased behold/ and proudly conscious of a purer age, forgive some fopperies of old" (The Every-Day Book, 927).

had lived all his life in urban settings, frequently told allegorical tales from the point of view of a peasant gathering nuts or firewood, thus superimposing a readily understood icon of political power—the archetypal confrontation between peasant and oppressive landowner—onto a situation that had as yet no common iconography in the realm of political discourse. Part of the lower classes' political struggle in the early nineteenth century was the struggle to disown traditional representations of their population, and to create new representational possibilities for themselves. Urban radicals like Hone adopted a ferocious rhetorical stance in which the aristocracy was transformed into a body destitute of morality or intelligence, while at the same time the restless "rabble" rhetorically enfranchised itself as "THE PEOPLE."

Hone was born in the midst of this struggle, into a class that held a tenuous position somewhere in that muddy region between the lower and the middle classes. Only a very short autobiography of this writer exists, written at the end of his life and limited to his first twenty years. Despite its short length and focus on his religious development, the autobiography gives us important insights into Hone's origins, which were typical of many of London's radical artisans. His religious influences aside, Hone described a life entirely centered on the conjugal family, private emotions, and a passion for reading. Reading was neither a novelty nor a privilege for the young boy, who learned the

skill from his father: it was a natural part of his life, already taken for granted at an early age. "For four years the greatest part of my time," says Hone recollecting his seventh year, "was employed in learning to write and in getting lessons thoroughly by heart from the bible" (Hackwood, 34). Though his family owned few books, he was a voracious reader, and he had no trouble finding reading material. This places him already in a social class higher than most of the population whom he sought to represent, but it also makes him typical of the radical intelligentsia who were frequently committed autodidacts. Hone was part of a highly stable urban culture, based on the subjectively realized individual, on bourgeois respectability, and the possibility of social and intellectual self-improvement. Despite his historical association with working-class interests, he did not believe that progress for the working classes lay in the creation of a distinct and oppositional working-class public as it did for William Cobbett. It lay in the assimilation of the working class by the middle classes. This was not an idea born of his religious conversion in old age, or his gradually developing moderation. It was something he suggests as early as 1817 in the Reformists' Register when he directly states "it is to the MIDDLE class now, as at other times, in this country, the salvation of all that ought to be dear to Englishmen must be confided." (Vol.1, no.1, 2) Since even in his sixties Hone was occasionally adopted as a socialist hero—a characterization which he angrily resisted—

there was evidently a disjunction between the intent of Hone's work and its effect. When referring to him as a radical, then, we must be careful not to associate him too strongly with the interests of any one particular class. He is the ambiguous product of an upwardly-mobile lower class, thoroughly imbued with the values and prejudices of the middle classes.

Despite Hone's historical identification with the working class, he and many of his radical colleagues sprang from that great "public of private people" which Jürgen Habermas described in The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere—a public that was entirely bourgeois in origin. My first two chapters are largely informed by the work of this social philosopher, who provides me with a compelling structure in which to place what was essentially a linguistic struggle. Habermas traces the emergence of a "Public Sphere" in a number of European countries including England. Put simply, the "public sphere" describes a common identity, arrived at by a shared access to the means of social interaction, particularly the print media. Sharing a relatively uniform ideology "the public" is primarily a political body: even if its members have no universal privilege to vote, the public nevertheless embodies a political consensus, called "public opinion," which those in power are forced to consider. The public sphere, then, is a "space" in which power is negotiated between authority and those subject to authority. Long before the radical press

could address its working-class readers as members of a *working-class* public, the middle class was already equipped with a social and literary apparatus which bound them together as a public. "Book clubs, reading circles, subscription libraries" says Habermas, "constituted the public...now held together through the medium of the press and its professional criticism" (51). Through these media the bourgeoisie "attained clarity about itself," constituting its members as private individuals sharing a common identity. Hone was born into this time when the bourgeois public sphere—which had been developing since the mid-seventeenth century—had a strongly established representational discourse, derived partly from the literature of sensibility and partly from the critical journals that emerged at the end of the century. But Hone was part of a disenfranchised culture which had been deliberately excluded from the public sphere. It is the radical response to their disenfranchisement that interests me in this study, and I will be examining strategies of subversion and appropriation which radicals adopted either to include themselves in an already existing public sphere, or to position themselves as members of a valid alternative public sphere.

Public opinion in the eighteenth century was formed primarily through print media; and by the early nineteenth century those media were more and more frequently being directed at the self-educated lower classes. Olivia Smith in her The Politics of Language notes that towards the end of

the eighteenth century refined literature, having been substantially freed from copyright restrictions and taxation, was becoming more readily available to the vulgar reader. Just as "the gulf between refined and vulgar literature was lessened" (155) so too was the gulf between the refined and the vulgar reader. An educated and reasonably well-off artisan family could afford to purchase cheap reprints of bourgeois classics (those read and owned by the bourgeoisie, not necessarily written by them), and much of what Hone read as a child falls into this category[3]. To some extent, then, the poorer classes could participate in Habermas' public sphere, at least to the extent that the public sphere was a literary community. But they could not participate as interlocutors, only as recipients of bourgeois ideology. Until the 1810's, the artisan, let alone the unskilled labourer, was excluded from representation in this part of the public sphere; and singularly lacking in the journals, newspapers and literature of the late eighteenth century is an adequate representation of the "lower orders." It is this discursive exclusion that leads Jon Klancher to say that the fundamental schism between classes in the nineteenth century was not that between employer and employed, but that "between the represented and the unrepresented" (Making, 102).

The analogy between political non-representation and literary non-representation is one that Smith explores

[3] Before the age of ten, Hone remembers reading the following books: Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "The Holy War," Janeway's "Token for Children," "Foxe's Book of Maryrs," Brooke's "Fool of Quality," "Garth's Dispensary," and works by Pope, Swift, Goldsmith, Addison, Thompson.

extensively in her discussion of language and politics. Smith points out that until at least 1818 parliament could reject a petition on the basis of its author's assumed lack of linguistic competence. "Ideas about language" says Smith, "justified class division and even contributed to its formation by accentuating differences in language practice" (3). And since vulgar language was assumed to characterize a vulgar mind "the disenfranchised could not write in a language which merited attention" (34). Language, then, could be used as an exclusionary device, and membership in the legitimate public was restricted by a hegemonic practice of language. I will argue in this paper that before the working classes could be adequately represented in parliament, they had to create a legitimate alternate public sphere, by borrowing, appropriating or subverting the existing apparatus of the bourgeois public sphere. Central to this argument will be an analysis of the ideas that radicals held about the language they spoke and that spoken by their political and cultural opponents.

I begin this study with an examination of perhaps the three most important days of Hone's life. In 1817, Hone was arrested and imprisoned for having published three parodies on scripture. He went to trial on the 18th, 19th and 20th of December and, contrary to the best expectations of both the Crown and the public, he convinced a jury in all three cases that he was innocent, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that he did not have a lawyer to represent him. The

trials ignited a public made volatile by years of governmental abuse, and Hone enjoyed almost unprecedented public support. At the close of his third trial a crowd of some twenty thousand onlookers swamped the steps of Guildhall cheering for Hone's victory and waiting for a glimpse of a new popular hero. The scene on the steps of Guildhall must have been as exhilarating for radical-reform sympathizers as it was threatening to Hone's persecutors, but in either case Hone's acquittal was seen as an important indicator of the times. "Hone's whole defense," wrote the Times of London, "will be read with an interest, and will excite feelings, now and hereafter, which it far exceeds our powers to appreciate" (Dec. 24, 1817). It is, then, as a "sign of the times" that I will be approaching Hone in this study: but as a "sign" Hone poses a complex and often ambiguous set of meanings, a fact that the Times alludes to when it admits that the significance of Hone's trial "far exceeds our powers to appreciate." In his own time, Hone was condemned by the government press as a "blackguard" opportunist, publishing seditious and even pornographic pamphlets, proof that England was on the verge of class warfare; to others he was an exemplary patriot and defender of "constitutional" principles, the very icon of a subaltern class striving towards self-improvement. As a member and a representative of an unstable class that was just beginning to "interpret" itself to an England that was still unsure how to accommodate its vociferous demands, Hone's "meaning" was that of an

entire class in the making. In my first chapter I look at Hone's position as a public representative, a man who, in speaking in his own defense, also spoke for an entire class. In that involuntary act of representation, Hone transformed the court-room into a microcosm of English society, and his trials became a symbolic struggle over the franchise from which he and his peers had been excluded.

In his trials, Hone attempted to assert his membership within an already existing public sphere. But the idea that there existed only one, monolithic public sphere in the nineteenth century, is one that has been criticized by readers of Habermas. The public sphere is not an objective entity, and public identity cannot be conferred on, nor withheld from, any one subject—though it has been argued that the middle classes did indeed attempt to arrogate that right to themselves (Eley, 305). Public identity is a function of discourse, and therefore it can be claimed by any speaker, regardless of social position. In his Reformist Register, Hone frequently posited public meetings by the disenfranchised as a kind of alternative parliament, circumventing an illegitimate parliament that was seen to have been expropriated by "Old Corruption." The sense that the working class had somehow been dispossessed of its rightful access to the franchise was a vital component of the radical political mind-set (Thompson, 85). Finding that the dominant culture had attained its authority through corrupt means, Hone and his radical contemporaries drew from

traditional elements of the demotic culture and forged a working-class public identity, possessed of its own validity and authority. In the second chapter of this study I examine the radical's rhetorical claim to legitimacy, and the consequences of this claim for the public sphere.

Just as radical artisans claimed a status for themselves as valid public citizens, they divested the dominant class of its own legitimacy. In deliberately forging for themselves a distinct working-class culture, radicals claimed to be in possession of an incorruptible, vernacular language. Theirs was a flamboyant rhetorical discourse that conveyed immutable truths, unmediated, to the ears of their audience. At the same time, they saw themselves as having been duped into obeisance to their social superiors by an elaborate system of signs and symbols. Radicals like Cobbett saw the ceremonies, pageantry, clothing and choreographed public events of the aristocracy as devices to awe the uneducated lower classes into servility (Gilmartin, 90). More importantly, radicals sought to demonstrate that their aristocratic oppressors spoke an entirely different language from their own: the language of the aristocrats was replete with Latinate terms and fanciful tropes designed to obscure their meanings and thus their oppressive intentions. Thus, the radical writer frequently appropriated the texts and speeches of the dominant classes, wrestling with them until they gave up their hidden truths. Hone, in his parodies and political essays, made a concerted attack on the dominant discourse,

demonstrating what he saw as the oppressive nature of its symbolism, and breaking down traditional codes of deference by showing that it was possible to take the words even of a king and savage them until they betrayed their own absurdity. In my final chapter I look at this opposition between two supposedly distinct languages and the almost universal practice of cultural appropriation. It is from this opposition, I suggest, that parody emerges as one of the privileged discourses of the radical movement.

It is as a parodist that Hone's contemporaries knew him best, but a summary of Hone's activities will show that parody was, in fact, a small part of his work. Hone's first publication in 1807 was a proposal for a savings bank, an institution optimistically titled "Tranquillity," designed to provide its contributors with "the Necessaries and Comforts" of life in their old age. The institution never became more than a proposal, and it is one of Hone's only forays into utopian schemes. Hone began to publish opportunistic pamphlets at a cheap price. Typical of most independent publishers of his day, Hone produced sensationalistic accounts of famous trials, murder investigations, biographies, political tracts, and the occasional pirated book. In 1816, he began his Reformist Register, which purported to be an "authentic History of Reform, abounding with excellent political information, in which he himself, and his children, and his country are deeply interested" (No.1, Vol.1, 1). Like many similar publications, the

Register went bankrupt within less than two years, abandoned by a public that seemed to turn away from polemical rhetoric and towards avowedly "non political" publications like the Imperial Magazine. Hone published several parodies during this time, three of which were to launch him into the public's view, not because they were especially good, but because Hone was tried in three highly publicized trials for blasphemous libel on their account. Between 1819 and 1822, incensed by the slaughter of demonstrators at Peterloo, Hone published the majority of his best parodic work. Among these productions is "The Political House That Jack Built," which is estimated to have sold nearly one hundred thousand copies (Paris, 71). In 1820, Hone responded to the Queen Caroline Affair with a parody titled "The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder." It parodied a popular children's toy and showed the Prince Regent's rung-by-rung descent into corruption and alcoholism. The pamphlet contained some of George Cruickshank's most brutal caricatures of the Regent, who at the end of the pamphlet is depicted barely alive in a wheel-barrow being sold as cat's meat. Hone's supposedly reluctant involvement in the Affair is indicative of his increasing ambivalence towards politics. Many years after the fact he wrote "my mind had begun to misgive me—that is, as to my interference with [politics]," (Hackwood, 237) and he claims to have been pressured into publishing further parodies, not by choice, but out of loyalty to the Queen. After 1822, Hone wrote very few new parodies although he would periodically reprint

collections of his more popular work.

Hone dedicated himself in his later years to publishing encyclopedias of popular lore, Biblical apocrypha, and small histories. His Every-Day Book, Year Book and Table Book, as well as his Apocryphal New Testament, continued to be published up to the first decade of the twentieth century. Hone's later works demonstrate a consummate skill in collecting and organizing informative volumes, but they are essentially "authorless," and have therefore been of little interest to modern students of literature. No account has yet been written about these fascinating repositories of popular culture, and even those who have written extensively on Hone's parodies have made little attempt to make a unified study of Hone's entire, disparate, oeuvre. In this respect, I am somewhat guilty of contributory negligence, although I do attempt to trace the origins of Hone's parodies in his earlier political writings. After 1831, Hone almost entirely ceased to write for the public and, after a conversion to Protestant Evangelicalism, spent his remaining years sub-editing the "Patriot," a weekly magazine which represented the political and religious view of evangelical Nonconformists (Hackwood, 329). Hone's publishing history, then, is typical of the many subsistence publishers who lived on the cusp of poverty and middle-class respectability. He was an opportunist, whose greatest skill was in tailoring his productions to popular taste. He, like most of his colleagues, plagiarized, borrowed and otherwise appropriated

literature from an astonishing variety of sources, which he fed through the mills of various small presses, making highly original new works. Hone, then, was not so much a writer as he was a publisher; and he was less involved in an *art* than he was in an *industry*.

My selection of Hone's texts has been relatively eclectic, though I have attempted to demonstrate that textual appropriation is an impulse common to them all. Hone's publications are incredibly diverse—he was a parodist, a polemicist and an historian—and I have not attempted to privilege any one genre over another. Despite the fact that this is a literary study, then, my definition of a literary work is a broad one and I have approached Hone's Three Trials with the same kind of analysis as I have his parodies. Previous studies of Hone's work have tended to focus more on Hone's collaboration with George Cruickshank than I have done in this study. This is mostly an accident of my having chosen to study texts that were not illustrated by Cruickshank—the Three Trials, the Reformist Register, and the "Slap at Slop," provide me with most of my material. I have also made minimal use of Hone's most famous work, "The Political House that Jack Built." Three excellent and exhaustive studies of this work already exist[4]—specifically treating the text as an act of appropriation—while nothing has yet been written on the Register and little has been written on his later parodies. In taking a latitudinarian approach to Hone's work, I have

[4] I refer extensively to each of these studies. See Marcus Wood, Olivia Smith and Michele Paris.

attempted to avoid treating each work as a discrete entity; for works that were in their own time entirely context-dependent, it would seem only appropriate to treat them contextually now. My intention, then, is to discuss Hone's work in terms of a cultural practice, and to show that each act of writing was an act of political and cultural subversion, not only because of they had been written with a subversive intention, but because they had been written at all.

Chapter One:

Background to the *Three Trials of William Hone*.

Until recently, history has not chosen to remember William Hone as a literary figure, but as a victim of political persecution; when Hone has been mentioned in historical texts of the last several decades—and less frequently in literary criticism— it has usually been in relation to his persecution by the government in 1817 for having published three political parodies, "The Late John Wilkes's Catechism," "The Political Litany," and "The Sinecurist's Creed." The trials were seen as a landmark case in the struggle for a free press in England (Hackwood, 127); but they are important to this study because they reveal a fundamental shift in the way working-class authors were beginning to think of themselves as public citizens. Before examining the trials in detail, however, I will give some background to Hone's arrest and its consequences.

As their titles indicate, the three parodies used scripture as a vehicle for their satire. The government, supposedly offended by Hone's impiety, arrested him on May 3, 1817 and charged him with blasphemous libel. It hardly needs saying that the Crown was less concerned with Hone's scriptural liberties than it was with his unpalatable politics, and most of Hone's experience with the law smacks of political persecution. Unable to pay an exorbitant bail of £750, Hone was kept imprisoned until July 5 when he was

released on his own recognizance. On the basis of what frequently happened in similar cases, Hone expected that his case would never actually go to trial and that the charges would be left open as a threat hanging over his future activities. But on December 18,19 and 20 Hone was made to defend himself in three separate trials, one for each publication. The jury in all three trials acquitted Hone, who had defended himself without counsel or representation, to almost unprecedented popular acclaim. In 1818 Hone published an account of the three trials in his The Three Trials of William Hone.

The years surrounding Hone's arrest in 1817 were fruitful years for his satiric imagination. This was a time in which the radical press was, albeit temporarily, reaching increasingly higher numbers of readers (Smith, 158). It was also a time when it was very dangerous to be a radical publisher. The government and the crown were particularly vulnerable, and therefore sensitive, to satiric attacks and popular calumny. Upon becoming George IV (in 1820), the Prince Regent had the dubious honor of entering his reign as perhaps the most despised and ridiculed of all British sovereigns, inheriting a tradition of royal parody that had blossomed into an industry around George III. England had just ended an expensive war with France, and hardships caused by several years of bad crops had encouraged increasing dissent amongst the lower classes (Thompson, 662). Parliament responded to the starvation of England's poor, and their

demands for political reform, by funding the platitudinous chap-books of Hannah Moore and by instituting seemingly endless repressive measures: Habeas Corpus was suspended March 4th 1817, and the Seditious Meetings Bill, the Treasonable Practices Bill, and the Army and Navy Seduction Bill were all put through parliament, giving the government almost unrestrained powers to suppress political dissent (Royle, 91). Caught in the middle of a concerted effort by the Liverpool administration to debilitate the dissenting press, Hone claimed to be the first radical publisher of the decade to be arrested under ex-officio informations as an example to other would-be dissenters (Reformist Register. Vol.1, no.16).

Hone was selected for prosecution for two reasons. First, he had made himself vulnerable after publishing parodies on sacred writings. Whereas prosecutions for seditious libel were notoriously unsuccessful, the crown saw that it could take advantage of a jury's religious sentiments to secure the conviction of a political enemy. Second, Hone symbolized for the government the growing threat of plebeian rebellion which it specifically connected with popular agitation in the demotic press. William Cobbett offered a more real threat to the government than did Hone, and he certainly had a larger readership, but he had already fled the country by the time Hone was arrested. In his April 5th and 12th issues of the Reformist Register, which were addressed to Cobbett's abandoned readership, Hone urged

"certain grounds, on which I claim your support for this publication," promising that he would "take up as much of [Cobbett's] ground" as he could (Vol.1, no.11). This, combined with the recent publication of a number of vitriolic squibs on the king, drew enough attention to him that, in sensationalistic speeches to parliament, Lord Sidmouth and Lord Castlereagh denounced the radical press and mentioned Hone by name as a particular offender (Reformist Register, Vol.1, no. 14).

On March 27th of the same year, Lord Sidmouth sent out a kind of declaration of war-his letter "of circular fame" as Hone called it in "The Political House that Jack Built," referring to the fact that it had been openly circulated for public consumption. In this widely published letter Sidmouth declares that "in the opinion of the law officers of the crown," Justices of the Peace could arrest any person upon oath for the publication of blasphemous and seditious libels and hold victims to bail before answering the charge. In effect, Sidmouth was claiming on behalf of the government the power to hold dissident publishers in prison for as long as he wanted without ever trying them. The grounds for Sidmouth's legal "opinion" were actually somewhat dubious, and because the letter was circulated openly it seems to have been intended as a threat more than as a legitimate legal proclamation. In a manner that anticipated his defense at Guildhall, Hone took Sidmouth's letter to task, demonstrating to the readers of his Reformist Register that, despite an

impressive show of authority, the letter had no legal basis. "This is a letter," wrote Hone, "a mere letter, nothing but a letter, and in no way concerning us the People" (vol.1, no.10). Hone's triple emphasis on the text's status as a "letter," draws it out of the intimidating realm of legal proclamation. As if it were mere whisperings between ministers, Hone treats the letter as febrile gossip, totally disowned by "us the People." Hone frequently reprinted articles from other papers as if to create the sense of a public consensus: in a later issue of the Reformist Register, he republished an article from the Morning Chronicle which made the impropriety of the circular letter clear:

> A Magistrate cannot legally hold a man to bail for publishing that which he may deem a seditious or blasphemous publication.... the provision of no Act of Parliament, at any period, can be quoted in its favour; while a host of authorities and precedents...sustain our opinion....According to [uniformly sanctioned practices] no one was held to bail for a libel, until a Grand Jury had found a bill against him.
> (Vol.1, no.11)

The power to hold defendants to bail was reserved exclusively for charges of treason, felony and breach of the peace, but at the time of Hone's arrest the government was expanding its control over the literary market by arrogating to itself powers it normally exercised only in conditions of national emergency. Such creative re-interpretation of statute became directly applicable to Hone when the government filed three ex-officio informations against him for the publication of the three pamphlets already mentioned[1]. On the following

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[1] Ex-officio informations were filed by the authority implied by the Attorney-

Saturday, Hone said in his next edition of the Register, "I wrote my last Register at home, in the midst of my family. Since then the reign of terror has commenced, and I now write from prison. I am the first object selected by the Attorney-General, Sir William Garrow, as a victim and an example"(Vol.1, no.16).

Hone's reference to his family was almost standard for trial literature of the time. Accused of deliberately threatening the stability of society, Hone turned the accusation against his persecutors who, in removing him from his family, had made an assault on the basic unit of society. Throughout his trials Hone pointed out what he saw as a disparity of scale: a modest bookseller being brought to trial on a warrant normally reserved for issues of national importance seemed to be an indication of the government's malice towards the people. After his arrest, Hone refused to plead to the charges, judging his mode of arrest to be unconstitutional: "However ancient this mode of proceeding might be, [Hone] was satisfied that it was never intended to be exercised in the way it had been of late years" (Three Trials,13). It is the government itself, then, that becomes criminal, and Hone's modus operandi throughout the trial was to remind his jurors that should they find him guilty, they

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General's office, and not based on any specific powers conferred to him by statute. This fact gave the Attorney-General considerable discretion in their use. Such informations were served apart from the crown prosecutor's office, and were generally used to circumvent the crown prosecutor in situations where the government, as distinct from the crown, felt urgent action was required to protect the state.

were supporting a system that could at any moment be turned against them. "By this process," said Hone "every man in the kingdom, however innocent he might be, was entirely at the mercy of the Attorney-General, and of the Government" (Three Trials,13). The filing of such heavy-handed informations against an almost destitute bookseller, reputed amongst friends for his eccentric love of books as much as for his parodies, seemed to many a ludicrous and discomforting liberty on the part of the government; and it won for Hone, in retrospect at least, considerable support even from those who disliked his publications. Thus, despite the best efforts of the government to obviate the political implications of the charges brought against Hone, his arrest and subsequent trials became from the outset a matter of public debate.

Claiming Public Identity

By the end of the eighteenth century, the courtroom was becoming a highly significant space, since it was there that public authority and private members of the public sphere confronted each other in a clearly defined relationship of opposition. Ordinarily, the courtroom was a relatively exclusionary space and those who appeared before it as private individuals generally submitted to the public authority which it claimed to represent. But Hone faced the court as the representative of an oppositional public and insisted that the court legitimize its own proceedings before

public opinion, so that the question that had to be settled was not the defendant's innocence or guilt, but the propriety of the state's interference in a self-regulating public sphere.

The trials were ostensibly concerned with protecting England's national religion, but they are of interest to this paper because the issue of blasphemy quickly receded into the background: it was widely recognized that the charge of blasphemy was merely a pretense under which the government could rid itself of a political enemy. Under other conditions, with a less capable defendant, a conviction for the charge of blasphemy could easily have been procured, especially given the absurdly high-ranking officials who undertook the prosecution: Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough himself took over the bench when the lower ranking Justice Abbott failed to make a conviction on the first trial. But Hone was practiced at making appeals to the public and, with some help from precedents set by the high-profile trials of Horne Tooke, John Thelwall, James Wooler and other radicals, Hone transformed his own trial into a public debate about the legitimacy of the Crown's repression of political dissent.

As if sensing this possibility, the prosecution began its case with the incredible assertion that Hone's parody "The Late John Wilkes's Catechism" had "nothing of a political tendency about it" but was "avowedly set off against religion and worship of the Church of England, as established by Act of Parliament" (Trials, 2). The pamphlet

begins:

> *Question:* What is your name?
> *Answer:* Lick Spittle.
> *Q:* Who gave you this name?
> *A:* My Sureties to the Ministry, in my Political Change, wherein I was made a Member of the Majority, the Child of Corruption, and a Locust to devour the good things of this kingdom.
> *Q:* What did your Sureties do for you?
> *A:* They did promise and vow three things in my Name. First, that I should renounce Reformists and all their Works, the pomps and vanities of Popular Favour, and all the sinful lusts of Independence. Secondly, that I should believe all the Articles of the Court Faith. And thirdly, that I should keep the Minister's sole Will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.

.... and so on. The claim that the parody had nothing to do with politics was patently false, and Sir Samuel Shepherd (who replaced Garrow as Attorney-General upon Garrow's death) could not have expected the jury to take his assertion literally. But in order for the prosecution to be successful it had to convince the jury that it was not proceeding against Hone for political reasons: a government acting as the safeguard of public religion, on behalf of the public, was on less tenuous ground than a government that was seen to be stifling political debate in its own self interest.

Shepherd's rhetoric becomes hyperbolic whenever he refers to Hone's alleged blasphemy, saying in one vehement statement that "the pamphlet before the jury was so injurious in its tendency, and so disgusting in its form, that any man, on first reading, would start (he had almost said) with horror from it; it was like an infecting pestilence, which every man shunned that valued his safety" (Trials, 65). By invoking images of infection and pestilence, Shepherd draws

from almost conventional representations of the lower classes in the eighteenth century. Augustan poetry is replete with analogies between mob activity and the spread of plague, both of which were linked to an unsound (and unsanitary) lower class (Rogers, 95). Such representations endured into the nineteenth century, and Shepherd relies on them to convince the jury of the parodies' seditious effects upon a lower order that is seen as incapable of rational thought. What was under discussion, then, was not the misuse of religious language, but the misuse of it by a member of the subaltern classes and, by extension, the propriety of subaltern participation in the public sphere altogether.

In its inception, the public sphere may have been imagined by its members as an all-inclusive space, but in practice it was the educated bourgeoisie who "occupied a central position within the public" (Habermas, 22). Brought together by a literary apparatus, the public sphere of the late 17th century could be confidently imagined as being composed of a relatively homogeneous class of readers, mostly of public administrators, officials and educators. By the 1790's an established market of newspapers, pamphlets and serial publications brought a larger reading audience into the public sphere, an audience that could no longer be addressed as if it constituted a particular social order (Klancher, 80). The lower classes were becoming interested in public debate, and newspapers put "readers in a relationship with both the state and other readers, without making

distinctions according to class" (Smith,162). For the first time, the lower orders could legitimately participate in criticism of the government as members of a monolithic public, and it is from this uneasy sense of a changing public sphere that Smith sees Hone's trial emerging.

Smith sees in Hone's trial a "conflict of ideas about language" (Politics,177) in which Hone had to establish the validity of his position as a subaltern speaker and writer, and not just the innocence of his publications. Smith's thesis, which I will return to again in this study, is that language was thought to define the capacity of its user, and therefore could be used as an indicator of the speaker's capability to participate in the offices of power. According to Smith, Hone's trial was an attempt to criminalize his and his class's vernacular language, and it was therefore a reaction against the lower class's self-representation as capable interlocutors in the political arena. Had Hone lost his trials Smith suggests that such vague concepts as "indecent" and "improper"—words that were used to describe Hone's writing—would have "gained legal currency, becoming evidence of criminality in themselves" (176). Though the trial is framed in the context of blasphemy, Smith suggests that it is the social position of the speaker that is under attack, not his vulgar use of biblical language: being "indecent" and "improper" were de facto consequences of being a lower-class speaker.

In his defense Hone established a vulgar but classless

tradition of biblical parody by reading endlessly from parodies similar to his own, most of them written by well-respected religious and political leaders, though some were demotic carols that had been sung for centuries by the lower classes. "Martin Luther" says Hone in a rhetorical collapsing of the social hierarchy, "was a parodist as well as William Hone" (Trials,151). It was up to the jury to decide whether or not Luther and Hone were the same kind of parodist, and whether or not their social difference was in itself enough to make Hone a criminal; if the jury was to judge parodies on their intrinsic contents alone by the standards of the court, they would have to condemn an entire history of parody. The jury's acquittal of Hone was to some extent a rejection of the notion that criminality could be based on class; it was taken as a declaration that the public sphere could accommodate demotic participation even in the form of political criticism.

The Crown's response to Hone's mode of defense was contradictory. The crown refused to accept Hone's evidence, though it allowed Hone to continue presenting it to the jury, insisting that one crime did not excuse another. All parodists using scripture, whoever they were and at whatever point in history they wrote, deserved to be tried for blasphemy: "every one of the parodies the defendant had quoted," says Ellenborough, "were as prosecutable as that with which [Hone] then stood charged" (Three Trials,174). In order to make its case against Hone acceptable, the crown had

to insist upon an inviolable standard of linguistic propriety that may have been regularly broken in the past but which if broken in modern publications would "deserve severe punishment" (104), since such parodies were "too indecent for the ears of any person in these times" (164). This was a position that proved to be embarrassingly untenable, since members of parliament, such as "Mr. Canning, the right honorable parodist" (176) as Hone called him, had also used scripture as a vehicle for satire. As Hone rightly pointed out, parodists who wrote in the Anti-Jacobin Review had never been brought to trial despite having written many parodies based on scripture: they had written, said Hone, "on the right side—that made all the difference" (59). At the same time the crown was upholding its standard of universal intolerance of scriptural parody, however, it based its entire case on a hierarchical notion of responsible readers: Hone's guilt lay, not in the parody itself, but in the fact that his pamphlet was intended to "find its way among the ignorant and uninformed, where it was calculated to have gross effect" (76). The trial, then, becomes a contest between two different representations of Hone and his audience, who were either "ignorant and uninformed," or competent public citizens able to read politically inflammatory material without themselves becoming inflamed.

Shepherd made several standard appeals to what he imagined was the jury's sense of an hierarchically organized public sphere of which they were in a position to be the

arbiters. He addressed his jury as members of a patrician class with responsibility for the minds and welfare of a dependent lower order. Shepherd describes the relationship between classes as equivalent to the relationship of a father to his family; the father as "master of the household" is analogous to an educated bourgeois public as he protects the minds and morals of his susceptible children, who in turn represent the lower orders. Shepherd begins, as he is to do with all the trials, by drawing a comparison between the conjugal family and the state. "If any of you gentlemen be fathers," he says, "and wish your children to hold in reverence the sacred subjects of Christian belief...say if you would not put [these parodies] into the hands of those children you love" (4). It is but a short step for Shepherd to transform fatherly benevolence into class-biased paternalism: "if you would not put them into their hands, would you into those of the lower classes of society, which are not fit to cope with the sort of topics which are artfully raised for them?" (4). Here it is that Shepherd posits a hierarchy of moral and linguistic competence. The sacred word is safe for dissemination amongst the lower orders as long as it is held with the utmost "degree of reverence which becomes the subject." Indeed its proper dissemination is desirable since scripture is "peculiarly destined for forming in the minds of the younger classes that proper foundation for religious belief which is to influence their future conduct" (3). Bringing religion into contempt,

Hone strikes at the very foundation of civilized society, so that Shepherd's accusation of blasphemy becomes, after all, framed in terms of a political debate. Hone is not on trial for offending God, but for upsetting the established order by entrusting a child-like subaltern class with potentially dangerous literature.

The Attorney-General's case relied on the notion that the uneducated lower orders were passive, non-subjective consumers of ideology, and therefore entirely at the whim of predatory booksellers. The Attorney-General seems to prove his point when, after a section of the parody is read into the records, the bottom of the court breaks out laughing: "I am not sorry for the faint smile just uttered in court," says the quick-thinking prosecutor, "It establishes the baneful tendency of the work." (5). The courtroom itself becomes an hierarchically organized microcosm of the larger public sphere with the bottom of the court demonstrating the mindless susceptibility of the lower classes. "Even in better cultivated minds," says the Attorney-General, inadvertently disparaging the intelligence of his chuckling audience, "the firmness of moral rectitude is shaken, and it often becomes necessary to make great mental exertion to shake off the influence of these productions" (4). Hone later contested Shepherd's insult to his readership by pointing out that this section of the population had been reading similar appropriations of holy scripture for centuries: "Publications of this kind could not have any effect, except amongst

persons of the most ignorant description" (45).

Understandably, Hone took exception to this kind of patronizing attitude towards plebeian authors and their readers. In the title page to "The Political House that Jack Built," which Hone wrote two years after his acquittal, he dedicated the work to "The NURSERY OF CHILDREN *six feet high*, HIS READERS, for the delight and instruction of their uninformed minds: THIS JUVENILE PUBLICATION is affectionately inscribed." The childish simplicity of the language Hone uses in this parody, combined with the brutality of its message, mockingly suggests that it takes no more than a child to recognize that a corrupt government is a corrupt government. Hone turns to the most common of children's rhymes, and ironically caters to the childishness that the cultural elite ascribe to the lower orders. Like Spence's "Pig's Meat" and "Salmagundi for Swine"—whose titles ironically appropriated Burke's infamous reference to the "swinish multitude"—Hone delighted in sarcastically aping the dominant culture's prejudiced perception of his class. Since his readers were supposed to be politically obtuse by their social superiors, Hone serves them with a political pabulum that is nevertheless unapologetically ferocious in its treatment of governmental corruption. With deliberate unconcern, radical publishers produced works which were calculated to outrage the lower orders without inciting them to violence or sparking the revolutions anticipated by the powerful, proving that they were competent members of the public sphere. The

technique was especially effective given that writers like Hannah Moore were using chap books and children's literature to promulgate a sanitized and safe political message amongst a class of people they saw as subjectively impoverished and childishly incapable of sophisticated political analysis. Hone uses the same device, but uses the childish verse to inscribe a concise and brutally simple condemnation of the present government.

But it is not a history of lower-class reading habits that the Crown is concerned with, a fact that Justice Abbott makes clear when he says "I do not care what the common people have had for centuries. If the publication be profane, it ought not to be tolerated" (45). What concerned the crown was the lower class's present participation in a public sphere undergoing profound change. The question of who was allowed to participate in this changed public sphere was one of "utmost importance to the constitution of society," claims Shepherd as he declares his own "duty to society as a member of it" (76). Hearkening back to an eighteenth-century notion of the Rabble, Shepherd questions the propriety of a lower-class reading public, especially given their anarchic response to Hone's parodies: "if the social bonds of society are to be burst asunder by the indecent conduct of a rabble," says Shepherd in response to a second outburst of hilarity in the court, "the Court may as well discontinue its proceedings" (75). That laughter was not so provoking to the government simply because it evidenced a breaking down of

traditional codes of deference; but because radicals believed their readers would *not* "burst asunder" the social bonds of society simply by laughing. Such a belief demanded an entirely different concept of lower-class social responsibility, and as such an entirely different concept of the public sphere.

Hone's trial was by no means the first in which a courtroom had been turned into a forum for political debate. Literally hundreds of poor and forgotten publishers and hawkers deliberately broke publication bans precisely so they could be arrested, in an attempt to exhaust the government's apparatus of suppression (Thompson, 797). These men, and occasionally women, effected a kind of appropriation of the courts by their sheer numbers and the repetitiveness of the charges against them. Further political use of the courts could be made by virtue of a quirk of English law in which all evidence given in court could be printed for public consumption; this encouraged radicals to digress from their defense in order to have their political opinions legitimately published. (It is an irony of Hone's trial that—despite Hone's voluntary suppression of the three pamphlets—not only did the pamphlets become a sought-after commodity, but their very illegality gave them a legitimate platform in which they could be published.) Individuals became representatives of a disenfranchised public and the courtroom an unsanctioned space for them to manifest political dissent. Undeniably brave and selfless as these individuals were—they

sometimes faced sentences of several years—their protests went quietly by the way and it took the trials of radical heroes such as Thomas Holcroft and Hone himself to force the court into the public's critical gaze.

In his reading of Hazlitt's Memoirs of the Late Thomas Holcroft, James Mulvihill points out that Hazlitt's account of Holcroft's trial in 1794 is "concerned largely with its perception in the public eye" ("William Hazlitt,"124.) Holcroft's voluntary and "carefully orchestrated" (124) surrender to the authorities had the effect of forcing the trial into a sphere of public scrutiny, much as if it were a staged play, and the outcome has the effect of a political victory: "in his fate seemed involved the fate of the nation....a whole people felt the enthusiastic transport of recovered freedom" (127). Such language was standard for trial literature and Hone's three acquittals are described in equally hyperbolic terms: "The people...left the Court, and as they proceeded along the streets, the language of joy was most loudly and unequivocally expressed; every one with whom they met, and to whom they communicated the event, being forward to swell the peal" (Trials, 70). Although Hone implied in court that he did not have the resources to publish an account of his trials (157), it is impossible to read the Three Trials of William Hone without feeling that Hone was, to a certain extent, orchestrating his defense for public consumption. Hone had published several accounts of sensational trials, and one of his earliest memories is of

reading the Tryals of John Lilburne to which his response was highly emotional: "I felt all Lilburne's indignant feelings, admired his undaunted spirit, rejoiced at his acquittal, and detested Cromwell as a tyrant" (Hackwood, 40). Smith discovers several instances in which Hone seemed to be modeling his own defense on Lilburne's and on other trials he had either read or written about. Hone, says Smith, portrays himself "according to the narratives that he had read as a child" (186), and those narratives especially include The Book of Martyrs. By the third trial, Hone's language becomes laden with martyrological allusions: "If Providence ever interfered to protect weak and defenseless men, that interference was most surely manifested in this case...[he] was a wonder unto himself" (153). As Wood suggests, such language had already become an established discourse in the trials of Lilburne, Foxe, Hardy, Tooke, Thelwall and Erskine, and each defendant seems to have drawn on a shared tradition. Whatever the case, as is demonstrated by his appropriation of nursery rhymes, children's toys and scripture for use in his parodies, Hone had a publisher's sense of how to invest popular literary forms with a fresh perspective and an increased marketability; trials were some of the century's most marketable public events, just as they are now. This is not to say that Hone saw his trials only as a marketable opportunity, but he knew how to take advantage of his audience's expectations and how to make his trial significant beyond the four walls of Guildhall.

Hone's Trials turned out to be popular reading, and part of its popularity was undoubtedly attributable to Hone's often dramatic accounts of the abuse he had suffered at the hands of his persecutors. Appropriately enough, Hone made much of the imbalance of power between himself and the crown, thus evoking a literary tradition of overwhelmed, but nevertheless successful, political heroes. One such episode stands out because, while it verges on absurdity, it nevertheless won for Hone a great deal of sympathy—or at least it found itself echoed in the publishing industry, attesting to its strength as an image. In his first trial, even before dealing with any of the charges leveled against him, Hone chose to complain to the jury that while waiting in prison to make his plea, he was removed from his cell and taken to Westminster Hall to plead just at a moment when he was "retiring for the purposes of nature" (15). So urgent was his need for a toilet that "in the coach, he found it almost impossible to keep himself from fainting; but he was told...sufficient time would be allowed him." The promised relief was never granted to him and the torture of his body continued, so that in court "whilst one of the informations was being read, a mist came before his eyes." Hone asked permission to sit, and in one of the most supposedly shocking examples of Ellenborough's inhumanity is told: "No," in a voice that Hone says was "pronounced with an intonation that might have been heard at the furthest end of the hall." Ellenborough's refusal to grant Hone some relief for his

failing body "instead of making [Hone] sink to the floor...had the effect that a glass of water on being thrown into his face would have had, and he felt perfectly relieved." On his return to King's Bench, the nearly vanquished Hone, still refused access to a toilet, is "found senseless in his room there, not having performed an office of nature for several days" (15). Lord Ellenborough's infamous "No!" caught the public imagination and a cartoon attributed to Cruickshank[2] actually inscribes the moment in a print titled "Law versus Humanity; or, a parody on British Liberty" (Hackwood, 175). Hone is depicted as weak and suffering as he asks "Pray may I be allowed to sit?" while the dour and unfeeling Ellenborough has a balloon emerging from his mouth with "Noooooooo..." written, as literally as Hone described it, across to "the furthest end of the hall." A nearly deaf crown prosecutor holding an ear trumpet mishears Ellenborough's refusal and exclaims in surprise, "Not S__t!!" It is this part of the print which is most striking, since it points out how easily Hone had laid himself open to ridicule by making this complaint so central to his opening salvo against the Crown (though the print itself is parodic of Ellenborough and not specifically of Hone). But by turning seemingly insignificant events into high drama, Hone seems to have been manipulating events for

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[2] The cartoon is relatively clumsy, demonstrating a less keen eye for caricature than Cruickshank was normally capable of. It also lacks the rapid, confident lines that are so characteristic of Cruickshank's drawings. The ascription is Marcus Wood's, but Hone's biographer, Charles Hackwood reproduces the cartoon without inscription.

their effect on an audience that would recognize a literary context for them. By emphasizing his vulnerability, both of body and social position, Hone locates himself within a history of trial literature in which he would be recognized as the disadvantaged hero in a struggle between right and might. Significantly, Hone recorded this story months before in his Reformist Register, but said only that he felt faint and was refused permission to sit: the story is passed over in two sentences (Vol.1, no.17). Hone saved the story for the trials (or rather, recognized its usefulness by the time he went to trial) and he relates it there in such dramatic terms, and at such an important juncture in the trial, that the trivial nature of his complaint is forgotten.

By marshaling a literary tradition in his defense—or at least, by eliciting certain literary responses from his audience—and by appealing to the public as an audience, Hone was appropriating the legitimacy of the crown and allocating the power of judging him to a self-regulating public sphere. Hone's defense, and his commentary in the Reformist Register, moved the focus away from the charge of blasphemy and revealed the issue to be one about the constitution of the public sphere. By winning his trial Hone also won symbolic public consent for the lower classes to participate in the public sphere as critics and interlocutors.

Hone's legal defense lay in proving that it was possible to write a parody based on scripture without ridiculing the vehicle itself. But his legal arguments were far less

important than his ability to tackle the underlying prejudices that had lead to his arrest in the first place. Typical of Hone's approach was his "educating" of the jury in the manner of their selection. It was customary for the Master of the Crown to "strike" a jury by randomly placing a pen between the leaves of a book of eligible jury-men. Suspicious that the book from which the Master of the Crown was striking the jury was not legitimate, Hone made a complaint and succeeded in forcing an embarrassing admission from the crown that they had, in fact, chosen a special jury. A new book was used, but on successive strikings Hone was able to find fault with the manner of jury selection. Hone made these comments directly to the jury, pointing out that he was nevertheless "satisfied...they would return a true verdict." The jury may or may not have been aware of how they had been selected, but Hone explained the shortcomings of the system in a way that directly implicated the jury members in governmental corruption: they, like himself, were victims of corrupt practices, and a verdict of guilty would constitute a tacit acceptance of such abuse.

Hone was not original in this approach, and in the Reformist Register he pays respect to the source of his inspiration, Horne Tooke, whose "masterly argument" Hone admits adapting "to the proceedings against...myself" (Vol.1, no.21). Tooke was amongst those radicals arrested for treason in 1794 along with Thomas Holcroft, and he had no less keen a sense of his public than did Holcroft. Tooke addressed all of

his comments to the jury, paying particular attention to their part in the Crown's alleged persecution of him. Tooke tells the jury that the Attorney-General has the power to try cases "by almost whom he pleases," suggesting that the jury had been selected according to their prejudices. "It may seem a strange thing for me to say to a jury who are trying my cause," he continues, "but it is a fact; for he is always sure to have a special jury for the trial of this sort of charge" (Vol.1, no.21).

By setting up an opposition between the jury and the Crown, both Tooke and Hone managed to displace authority from the bench to the jury box. "Gentlemen, it is you who are trying me to day," says Hone, "His lordship is no judge of me. You are my judges and you only are my judges" (Trials,148). More importantly, the jury members are reminded of their position as members of a public whose interests may not necessarily coincide with those of the government. They are not trying the defendants simply upon a discrete charge of blasphemy or sedition. They are deciding upon the authority, as Tooke puts it, of the government to "exclude [him] from that society, of which I have rendered myself unworthy" (June 14, 650). The jury is asked to decide upon the composition of a modern public arena which in theory has been inclusive, but which in practice has been open only to a privileged few. Hone seeks from the jury a confirmation that the exclusion of the lower orders from the sphere of political debate was no longer a tenable position:

> men, as they intermixed more kindly, respected the conscientious opinions of each other... and thus each would tolerate the other. He therefore, from a jury of enlightened merchants of the City of London, claimed their protection of his rights to express his opinions, opposed, as he imagined they might be, to their own (120).

Hone imagines a public sphere in which class boundaries fade as men of all social ranks "intermix more kindly," their only criterion for claiming membership in the public sphere being the ability to formulate a "conscientious opinion." The criteria that Hone sets are, in fact, exactly those suggested by Habermas. Claiming protection from the jury <u>against</u> the Crown, Hone questioned the legitimacy of the Crown's attempt to regulate the public sphere according to political opinion and class status. Hone rendered public authority illegitimate by convincing his jury that the government was acting in self interest. Subverting the crown's authority, even in the very place where its authority was most demonstrable, Hone succeeded in legitimizing the notion of a class-blind public sphere that could regulate itself by the free exchange of ideas.

By the end of Hone's third trials a crowd of "not less than 20,000" had accumulated at Guildhall and its surrounding avenues, and upon hearing of Hone's acquittal, the crowd was "desirous of forcing their way into the Court." Both literally and figuratively, Hone had opened the courts to the public. Just as the thousands of onlookers on the streets attempted to push their way into court and thus make its space their own, so Hone managed to invert the proceedings

against him by addressing the jury as representatives of a larger public. It was not the Crown which was trying him, it was the People who were to decide his innocence or guilt, and in doings so to decide upon fundamental questions about their ownership of the public sphere.

Chapter Two:

Radical Rhetoric and the Subversion of the Public Sphere.

Hone, as I have discussed in the context of his trials, claimed a position for himself within the public sphere by claiming to represent, and to be supported by, "public opinion." I have so far adopted Habermas' model of the public sphere as a specifically bourgeois ideal of liberal democracy, and I have ignored the possibility of alternative models of publicness. Habermas's public sphere is of a relatively homogeneous composition, originating within a nexus of bourgeois social practices, and defined by the reasoned exchange of political opinion. In the trials, Hone appealed to this relatively monolithic, bourgeois ideal of publicness. But in other contexts, specifically in his parodies, Hone's concept of public belonging and public representation is more complex and reflects the need for a model of the public sphere—or spheres—that is capable of including multiple public identities. "The Public," in this context, is better understood as a function of competing, rather than consensual, ideas about legitimacy, identity and authority. The public sphere becomes a contested space in which the right of citizenship is arrogated to a few but claimed by many.

While Habermas admits to limiting his study of the public sphere to its specific emergence within a bourgeois

social context, he has nevertheless been criticized for the relatively narrow scope of his study. Social historians have since sought to expand the compass of Habermas' public sphere, and have suggested a more fractured model of public participation that allows for differences in gender, class, and race[1]. The public sphere can be described as a metaphorical "space" in which collective political opposition to the state is manifested, and it is therefore a space in which issues of power are negotiated between the public and state authority. Revisionists of Habermas have invested his study with a greater degree of complexity based on the assumption that access to the resources of power is unequal since not all subjects who claimed to be "reasonable" public citizens could also claim the ear of the state.

If we return to Smith's assertion that a hegemonic model of language prevailed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, we can see that "reasoned debate" is a problematic basis for a class-inclusive model of public belonging since "Reason" is in itself implicated in the hegemonic practice of language. The capacity for reason, Smith argues, was thought to be demonstrated only by "proper" speakers of language. In a hierarchy that identified vulgar language as "indecent" and "improper," the popular idiom was inherently supposed to demonstrate a lack of reasoning ability in those who used it, and subaltern speakers were considered "morally and

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1 See, for instance, Craig Calhoun's Habermas and the Public Sphere, a series of essays interpreting Habermas' work.

intellectually unfit to participate in culture" (Politics, 2). If, as Habermas defines it, the public sphere comes into being only in the exchange of reasoned debate, then it follows that the public sphere was expressly exclusive of speakers who demonstrated improper—or in the usage of the day, "ungentlemanly"—speech. This arrogation of legitimacy to one particular social practice of language had very material ramifications for subaltern speakers. Smith describes how petitions to parliament were routinely dismissed from consideration if they were not written in sufficiently "gentlemanly" language, a policy that effectively closed the doors of parliament to all but the dominant classes (or else made members of subaltern classes dependent upon better educated representatives). The policy protected parliament from the criticism of a large portion of the population by rendering its members illegitimate as speakers and thereby invalidating their self-representation as members of a public (or members of "The Public"). The public, as it was envisioned by legitimate state authority, was innately exclusive and presupposed the absence of alternate or oppositional publics.

Hone's successful acquittals in his three trials were, to some extent, a vindication of his claim that he, as a vulgar speaker, had every right to participate actively in the public sphere. Specifically, the acquittals vindicated the commonly accepted principle of inclusiveness that was so central to the ideal of a monolithic public identity. But

subsequent persecution of radical publishers through taxes, propaganda, and repressive legislation nevertheless managed to reinforce an exclusive and hegemonic practice of public debate, and the radical publications that flourished in the years 1815 to 1820 soon disappeared from the public arena. Having "a monopoly over the legitimate use of coercion" (Habermas, 18), the state was able to maintain an "official," exclusionary public sphere to suite its own practice of power. Acts of violence by Church and King mobs, distribution of propaganda, and the notorious stamp taxes directed at controlling the press, all combined to yoke the "legitimate" public to the interests of the state. But the idea of there being an "official" public sphere does not mean that such an idea was not contested and subverted, or that the public sphere was not continually redefined. Popular radicals like Hone, Spence and Cobbett routinely addressed their readers—and positioned themselves—as members of the Public.

Objecting to Habermas' model of a specifically bourgeois public sphere that later "degenerates" into a mass public, Geoff Eley takes issue with Habermas' thesis and demonstrates instead the "fractured and contested character of the public sphere" ("Nations," 326). Eley questions Habermas' claim that the public sphere originated in the "intellectual transaction of a polite and literate bourgeois milieu" despite the attempts of this bourgeois public to "appropriate such a function to itself and to establish exclusive claim on the practice of reason" (305). The ideal of a public citizenry,

as this ideal was held by its bourgeois constituents, was as a monological space so that "publicness" was defined by the practice of a particular "reasoning" language. This meant in theory that participants in public discussions were blind to the social status of their interlocutors, and that any political debate could be resolved solely on the basis of the best argument. Whatever value was placed in such an ideal, it was nevertheless practically unworkable for the obvious reason that people do not willingly give up power conferred on them by status. The middle class, argues Eley, was, to the contrary, deliberately hegemonic, practicing a model of linguistic propriety that was intended to harness "public life to the interests of one particular group [such as] a social bloc ordered around the dominant classes" (326).

Eley complicates Habermas' "classic" model of the public sphere by suggesting that even in its inception "the classic model was already being subverted...as the action of subordinate classes threatened to redefine the meaning and extent of the 'citizenry'" (307). Eley posits a number of contesting, often oppositional, publics emerging at the same time as political and social units in which "public opinion" is being formed. Publics that are composed of subaltern groups—such as women, the urban poor, peasants and labourers—are not, therefore, merely outgrowths of an already existing bourgeois public sphere, but co-emergent publics that become subordinated by hegemonic mechanisms to the interests of more powerful social orders.

The task of radical publishers and activists was, in Eley's words, to "educate their readers into citizenship." Where Habermas' public sphere emerges in the nexus of middle-class social activities (such as opera houses, coffee shops and through print media), we can see radicals of the late eighteenth century already using popular or vulgar forms to inculcate in their particular audiences a sense of public identity. Thomas Spence is an ideal example of a radical who was able to manipulate an astonishing variety of media to create a public identity for his audience that was not dependent upon exclusively bourgeois social intercourse. Spence inscribed tokens, or coins, with radical icons and slogans and distributed them freely amongst the public; he put revolutionary lyrics to well-known songs such as "God Save the King," or "politicized" popular children's fables like "Jack the Giant Killer" by explicating them as disguised expressions of plebeian discontent. Spence compares the giants in such stories to the "dukes, lords, and barons of the present day," and he suggests that their deaths at the hands of peasant labourers are a disguised form of plebeian wish-fulfillment:

> Therefore, the stories of enormous and tyrannical giants, dwelling in strong castles, which have been thought fabulous, may reasonably be looked upon as disguised truths, and to have been invented as just satires upon great lords....These are the monsters, or giants, that the world want to be rid of. The extirpation of these should employ the philanthropic giant-killers, the deliverers of mankind. (A Further Account of Spenconia)

Without changing a single word of the original tales, Spence

appropriates an entire sub-genre of popular fables and invests them with a "programmatic" content. Traditional plebeian folklore is replete with symbolic acts of subversion, but such tales are not calculated to incite real insurrection but to help plebeian subjects mitigate what they see as the unchangeable circumstances of their lives. Tales that previously had no seditious implications, however, suddenly become calls to action. Spence educates his readers in a particular reading strategy which forces them into a new relationship to their own literary tradition; using a vocabulary of symbols that was already immanent within demotic culture, plebeian readers could articulate an organized resistance to the dominant culture. More importantly, however, Spence instructed his plebeian readers in the rational discourse of their political oppressors. In a typical dialogue written in the style of popular chap-books (a style which Hannah More later appropriated for more conservative ends), Spence places a female speaker in debate with the "Aristocracy:"

> 'And pray what are the Rights of Infants?' cry the haughty aristocracy, sneering and tossing up their noses.
> ***Woman***. Ask the She-bears, and every she-monster, and they will tell you....in resolute language and actions too, that their rights extend to a full participation in the fruits of the earth....Why do you ask that aggravating question? Have not the foxes holes, and the birds of the air nests, and shall the children of men have not where to lay their heads?
> ***Aristocracy*** (sneering). And is your sex also set up for pleaders of rights?
> ***Woman.*** Yes, Molochs! our sex were defenders of rights from the beginning....females, will vindicate the rights of the species, and throw you and all your panyers in the dirt.

. . . .

Aristocracy. Woman! Our fathers either fought for or purchased our estates.
Woman. Well confessed, villains! Now out of your own mouths will I condemn you, you wicked Mollocks!
(The Rights of Infants)

Spence, here, collapses the expected discursive hierarchy first by structuring this unlikely conversation between a peasant woman and her aristocratic landlords, and secondly by giving the peasant woman discursive authority. She violates the expected discursive conventions by "overspeaking" her aristocratic interlocutors in a torrent of abuse and rhetorical questions to which she allows the aristocrats no response. Where the aristocratic speakers rely on a snobbish affectation of superiority, sneering and turning up their noses as a means of establishing their authority, the woman speaks in bold, exclamatory sentences and arrives at her uncontested conclusions through a process of analogous reasoning ("have not the foxes holes...and shall not the children of men have where to rest their heads?"). The female speaker is positioned as a master of language: she is able to accuse her interlocutors of sophistry, thus demonstrating that she was not susceptible to a language that is calculated to be deceptive. Able to identify false reasoning, the woman asserts her own rationality. Later she uses the aristocrats' own words against them: "well confessed, villains! Now out of your own mouths will I condemn you, you wicked Molocks!" (6) Not only does the woman speak far out of proportion to her station, but even when she allows the aristocrats to speak

she is able to turn her adversaries' language to her own use. The exchange here is less about reasoned argument than about the possession of language itself, and the speaker of Spence's dialogue violates all the conventional rules. Appropriating the language of the aristocrats, and using it against them, the peasant woman dispossesses the aristocrats of language and, consequently, of power. In a system where language was used to exclude certain speakers from the structures of power, radical activity was frequently directed at subverting assumptions held about language. The woman of Spence's "Rights of Infants" is essentially acting as a public citizen, though one who is unsanctioned and therefore shocking. Her legitimacy rests solely on her linguistic expertise rather than social position so that Spence posits a legitimate public subject who is nevertheless excluded from sanctioned political debate, and in doing so constructs a subversive or alternative public sphere.

In his three trials, Hone *assumed* his rightful belonging in a monolithic public sphere. The issue of the trials, then, was not that there might be alternatives to the public sphere of the middle class, but that Hone could legitimately claim membership in it. We can see other instances in Hone's work, however, where he discredits the legitimacy of the "official" public sphere and posits a second, extraparliamentary, but nevertheless legitimate public sphere.

In the first issue of the Reformist Register, Hone begins by praising the innumerable gathering for reform which

he envisions being held across the country. The first paragraph is worth quoting in full:

> Again has the energy of THE PEOPLE been roused; and once more will the great question of PARLIAMENTARY REFORM be discussed. Numerous have been the MEETINGS—singularly wise are the Resolutions and Petitions passed at those Meetings—wonderful indeed, has been the unanimity of the people. Numerous, and not less wise, or less unanimous will those be which are about to follow. At no Meeting has there been a want of speakers. An extent of talent and political knowledge has been displayed from one end of the island to the other which no man could have anticipated. (Vol.1, no.1)

The language here is deliberately exaggerated. The passive construction of each sentence serves only to increase the number of words used, so that the language swells in importance. Almost every sentence inverts the syntactic order of ordinary speech, beginning with an adverbial phrase and ending with the verb phrase in a rhetorical emphasis on quantity. These repetitive adverbs accumulate rapidly—"again," "once more," "Numerous,"—to give the sense of something infectious and unstoppable spreading "from one end of the island to another." My use of the word "infectious" is deliberate. Pat Rogers, in his analysis of Augustan representations of the eighteenth century crowd, describes how conservative opponents of reform imagined lower-class protest as a social plague. Satires of the eighteenth century are replete with plague and fire imagery associated with mob activity: "moral and physical decay was, for the Scriblerian group, *catching*" (Grub Street, 97), says Rogers, who links the fear of increasing mob activity to the twin disasters of plague and fire which had swept London in earlier decades.

Pope, in a typical representation of an utterly nonsubjective crowd, "shows us a crowd 'intellectually inferior to its components,' easily hoodwinked by a leader, and bent obscurely on rebellion against it knows not what" (105). Compare this to Hone's representation of "The People" who collectively arrive at "singularly wise" resolutions to reform the parliament. They are, in other words, a fully realized public. Klancher, in his The Making of English Reading Audiences, notes the resemblance between such eighteenth-century representations of the mob, and the manner in which radicals addressed their audiences as collectives that could "spontaneously revolt to defend traditional values and rights" (99). Such collectives, formerly seen by the Augustans as undirected mobs, were envisioned as organized audiences for the radical writer. Unlike the novelistic literary trend of the day, in which authors addressed their readers as individuals with whom they strove to make intimate contact, radical writers eschewed individuality: "The radical text," says Klancher, "was not meant to form a singular bond between reader and writer, but to bind one reader to another *as* audience, a readership the radical writer both confronted and spoke for in a complex rhetorical act of 'representation'"(100). The Augustan tropes, which were embedded in the culture by the time Hone adopted them, were used by Hone in an entirely different context, thereby diffusing the rhetorical effectiveness of their original usage. What was once infection now becomes an overflow of

spontaneity: "the blaze of intellect–the glorious light of knowledge–[is as] equally shining and generally diffused as the MEETINGS FOR REFORM." Just as Hone imagines discrete meetings across the country uniting "THE PEOPLE" in a single cause, so his rhetoric yokes his readers together as an undifferentiated audience. It is in this undifferentiated audience that Hone found his legitimate public.

This was a public, however, that occupied an ambiguous position. By its very nature, the public which Hone addressed as his audience was in perpetual confrontation with the upper middle and aristocratic classes whose cultural hegemony excluded the disenfranchised from power. And yet, when Hone spoke of "PUBLIC MEETINGS," and "the public spirit and public virtue of the present day," his public was necessarily universal, a coherent entity without internal strife or external opposition. Hone's public– in literature as it was in life–was always on the verge of fragmentation even as it was impelled towards coherence.

The ambiguity with which Hone represented his alternate public sphere, stems from the recognition that the "legitimacy" of the official public had been acquired by a corruption of language itself. In order to claim space for themselves within the public sphere, radicals had to deligitimize that public to begin with, subverting the very institutions which they sought to make their own. Early radicals, especially Cobbett, saw the dominance of the social elite as having been effected through the propagandistic use

of signs; Cobbett described it as a "system" that seemlessly upheld the social order by the manipulation of symbols. "By limiting the available range of thought and action," says Kevin Gilmartin, "tyranny prevents resistance and elicits the (often unwilling) consent of its victims" ("Victims," 90). Gilmartin says that radical authors were confronted with having to both "free themselves from the influence of tyranny" by forging an unadulterated language of the oppressed, while at the same time engaging with their enemies in the enemy's own language to undermine them (90). Radical authors are therefore ambiguous in their use of language. In one moment they adopt the language of the cultural elite to demonstrate their competence in its use, while at the next, they either reject it or subvert it.

The Radicals' penchant for excessive rhetoric is characteristic of the latter impulse. The rhetorical style was one that, as Klancher points out, had become outmoded in dominant discourses: "'rhetoric' itself, as a mode of public discourse increasingly felt to be culturally outmoded and theoretically indefensible, would become attached to a new cultural site in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as the language of radicalism" (99). This bold language signified a rejection of the expected lower-class behavior of deference and silence, and was a determined appropriation of the authority to speak. In its rejection of silence, the rhetoric of the radical artisans becomes effusive and extravagant, overly punctuated with exclamation

marks and block capitals as it pronounces on absolutes. The language of oratory—in which repetition and copia are valued—here finds its way into a print culture that has rejected the "polite" formulations of an educated, literate elite.

Hone's rhetoric is characterized by an excessive and incessant repetition of key words. Returning to the introductory paragraph of the Reformist Register, the word "Meetings," which is always capitalized, is used fourteen times. Hone thereby imagines an irrepressible public which finds its identity, not in relation to parliament, but within the context of unsanctioned, spontaneous gatherings which nevertheless claim the authority to discuss "the great question of PARLIAMENTARY REFORM." This repetition of key words becomes an important precursor to Hone's parodic technique, which I will discuss in my next chapter; but in the context of the introduction it serves to invest key words with talismanic importance. In the first three sentences, Hone introduces the three most important words or phrases in block capitals—"THE PEOPLE," "PARLIAMENTARY REFORM," "MEETINGS"— almost as if they were newspaper headlines: the rest of the article simply embellishes upon that important core. The bracketing of these three words is similar to George Cruikshank's illustration of "The WORD" in "The Political House that Jack Built." The word is "REFORM" inscribed in strikingly simple block capitals on a bordered banner hung with laurels (fig.1). The image is completely static, becoming a visual analog for the simple and

unaffected discourse of the lower orders. This single, but impressive, evocation of the word invests it with a great deal of importance; similarly, the repetition of certain key words is like an incantation, making the word—"the Talisman word," as Cruickshank's illustration is described—almost magical. Engaged in a linguistic battle, radicals invested their words with talismanic importance, attempting to make their meanings immutable.

This approach to language is closely related to the Radicals' treatment of their political leaders. Borrowing from E.P. Thompson, David Vincent points out that radical politics were characterized by an impulse to demagoguery. Distrustful of traditional sources of authority and of the political system, radical audiences flocked around charismatic individuals who were seen as capable of operating outside of traditional systems. These individuals embodied "the meaning and the relevance of abstract rights" (Literacy, 244), making politics more accessible to those lacking in political training. Politics were thus harnessed to individuals whose names "were made as public and as resonant as possible" (Literacy, 244), in an attempt to circumvent ordinary political channels. Seeing themselves as victims of symbolic and linguistic manipulation by the cultural elite, radical authors carved out an inviolable discursive space for themselves using highly resonant words. Just as Spence's sophistic aristocrats spoke a language calculated to deceive, Hone's parliamentarians express themselves through "calumny,"

"new fangled laws" and "Gagging Bills" calculated to "extinguish reason." Radical rhetoric, however, decries sophistry and obfuscatory language and purports to be the language of revelation and immutable truths.

The existence of a public sphere is premised upon the ability of its subjects to speak freely, since it is in discourse that a consensual identity emerges. Where Hone and his contemporaries found their freedom to speak curtailed in the officially sanctioned public sphere, they found unrestricted arenas—alternate public spheres—where they became effusive. While he was under arrest, the Reformist Register became for Hone one such public forum in which he could reclaim his right to speech even as the government was attempting to deprive him of that right. In the Register of June 21, Hone records an encounter with Lord Ellenborough shortly after his arrest in which he finds himself repeatedly prevented from speaking:

> **Mr. Justice Baily**. Do you plead?
> **Mr. Hone**. My Lords, if you will hear me, I shall show you why I ought not to be asked to plead.
> **The Court**. You must plead. We cannot hear you. You must plead directly.
> **Mr. Hone**. My Lords, I entreat to be heard.
> **The Court**. The time of the Court cannot be wasted. You must plead instantly.
> **Mr. Hone**. My Lords—
> **Lord Ellenborough**. Plead at once. Say whether you will plead or not. The Court cannot have its time taken up in hearing such stuff; if he refuses to plead, he must be taken away.
> **Mr. Hone**. My Lords—
> **Lord Ellenborough**. Let him be committed.
> (Vol.1, no.22)

Hone approaches the bench as a reasoning subject, capable of interpreting the law and sharing the discourse of those who

dominate him. He is nevertheless dismissed as an interlocutor, wasting court time as he attempts to speak, and succeeding in speaking only "stuff." The encounter is a very real demonstration of authority, but Ellenborough's authority to curtail Hone's speech is based only on what is seen as his illegitimate recourse to force. Refusing to engage with Hone in reasoned debate, Ellenborough threatens to recommit Hone to prison unless he makes a direct plea to the charges, guilty or not guilty. Hone inscribes the event in detail for his readers of the Reformist Register, an act which goes beyond the mere recording of information. Having been made illegitimate as a speaker within the confines of the court room (the symbolic site of the official arbiters of public life), Hone meticulously records and comments on the very process in which he is forbidden to speak. He thus recuperates his authority to speak by demonstrating in an alternate public arena the very ability of which the court has deprived him.

There is, then, a fracturing of the public sphere in which contesting parties claim to be the only legitimate representatives of the public. Official public representatives are rendered illegitimate in the radical press and legitimacy is conferred on a public bound together in its determination to oppose what it sees as "absolute despotism" (Vol.1, no. 22). Eley locates this fracturing of the public sphere in its inception, but the question of origin is perhaps moot for the compass of this study. At the

time Hone becomes active as a publisher, the idea of the public sphere as a middle-class entity was prevalent, and radical activity was primarily directed at mitigating its exclusivity. Hone himself occupies an ambiguous position as he vacillates between representing an oppositional, alternate public possessed of its own validity, and educating his readership into being fit members of a pre-existing monolithic public sphere. In the introduction to the first Reformist Register which I have been examining, Hone seems to be doing both. Even as he posits a public that he sees emerging spontaneously among the "industrious" classes through political meetings, he credits the middle classes for having made such a movement possible, contrasting them with the "NOBLES of the land:"

> [the Nobles] *call* no Meetings—they *attend* no Meetings—on the contrary, they do all they can to *prevent* Meetings.
>
> It is to the MIDDLE class...the salvation of all that ought to be dear to Englishmen must be confided: it is amongst *this* class that the great improvement has been going on; it is from *this* class, now informed as no class in any country, at any time, ever were informed, that whatever of good may be obtained will proceed. [Hone's emphasis.]

Holding "Meetings," here, becomes the standard of public participation. In their attempt to prevent public meetings, the Nobles have abdicated their traditional public responsibility, and no longer act as "*hereditary* guardians." To the extent that they do manifest some civic responsibility—establishing "soup Kettles to dole out broth in scanty portions"—it is solely because they are "*alarmed for themselves.*" Thus, Hone renders traditional public

authority illegitimate, but rather than claiming public authority on behalf of the working classes he seeks to attach that authority to the middle classes. The advertisement, which Thompson says was first drafted by the moderate Francis Place, was "a clear attempt to rescue the reform movement from the influence of the manhood suffrage policy" (Making, 671). The public that Hone envisions emerging spontaneously among the "industrious people" is one that is still prone to insurrectionary tendencies; its energy must be subsumed by an educated, "improved" middle class whose gains and political activities are to be emulated by the working classes. Even as Hone represents the concerns of England's working poor, therefore, publicness remains primarily a bourgeois quality.

Participation in the public sphere thus relied on an ambivalent *embourgeoisement* of the lower classes. Hone sought to legitimize lower class participation in the public sphere by establishing in practice what was already accepted in theory: participation in the public sphere should be dependent on the subject's capacity for reason alone and not on social status. Klancher claims that radical authors addressed the reader of their texts as "'an inseparable part of the social order, undetachable members of an audience contesting its position in social and cultural space" (100). This may be true in the rhetoric of many radical publishers, but it is not accurate to say that radical authors saw class, or class identity, as immutably fixed. For Hone, the boundaries between classes were fluid, and his political

agenda relied on the transgression of those boundaries. In the radical texts of the early nineteenth century, therefore, representation of the lower classes is a complex fusion of sometimes contradictory identities.

And yet, this is a transition that goes beyond mere copying. There is a complex and often confusing tension that results from the simultaneous embracing and rejection of the dominant culture's ideology. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the radical writer's use of language. Authors like Hone used language in an utterly self-conscious and often ironic manner, adopting the tropes and styles of the cultural elite in an attempt to assert their rationality even as lower-class subjects. By demonstrating that they too where in the possession of reasoning faculties, lower-class authors could also claim to be public citizens. At the same time, however, radicals were subverting those tropes and styles and thereby subverting the very assumptions upon which such claims to citizenship were made. The result was a "democratizing" of language in the public sphere, where speakers could at will position themselves discursively at the center of the hegemonic culture, while simultaneously holding that culture in an ironic contempt.

Chapter Three:

Radical Parody and the Subversion of Language

Early radicals delighted in their ability to appropriate the language of their social superiors and use it against them like a captured weapon. "Radical writers," says Klancher, "turn restive artisans from machine wreckers into Luddites of language, savage parodists of the dominant culture's ideology and texts" (Making,100). Klancher raises this compelling analogy between the Luddites and radical parodists without pursuing it any further; but the comparison is an appropriate one because it emphasizes the antagonistic stance that radicals had, not simply towards particular individuals or classes, but towards a particular practice of language. In their aggressive relationship to the dominant culture—and its signs and symbols—radical authors made parody one of their most important modes of political discourse.

Like Wordsworth's projected Recluse, one of the greatest "might have beens" in all of literary history must be Hone's unwritten Complete History of Parody. In an advertisement dated March, 1820, Hone notified customers that he had been "unremittingly employed in the collection and arrangement of rare and curious materials" (Hone's Select Popular Political Tracts). His intention was to justify his own motives in publishing the three parodies for which he had been charged with blasphemy, and of "throwing a strong light upon the presumable motives of my prosecutors in singling me

out from my Noble and Right Honorable Fellow Parodists." During the course of his trials, Hone compiled a prodigious quantity of parodic literature, much of which he produced in court as evidence in his defense. Never one to miss a publishing opportunity, Hone saw that he could make further use of his labours by republishing these parodies in an illustrated history. Hone was a canny publisher, but he was also a disastrous businessman, and before he could publish his book he encountered a number of financial mishaps. Forced into bankruptcy, his entire collection of parodic prints was sold *en bloc* for a fraction of what they had been worth, and Hone was forced to abandon what we can only imagine to have been an extraordinary project.

Hone's ironic allusion to his "Noble and Right Honorable Fellow Parodists" is telling. During the course of his trials, and subsequently in several parodies, Hone made frequent reference to "Mr. Canning, the right honorable parodist" (Three Trials,176), who was then a member of parliament and would become prime minister in 1827. Known widely for his parodies in the Anti-Jacobin Review, Canning had also used scripture as a vehicle for his satire, and Hone delighted in flaunting this evidence of the government's hypocrisy, since it was unlikely Canning would also be charged with blasphemy. But underlying Hone's ironic adoption of Canning as a "fellow parodist," there is a more important claim for the status of parody. When Hone read his collection of parodies to the jurors in his trial, he chose writings

from celebrated aristocratic authors, government officials and clergy. Next to these, and with no sense of disparity, he also read from vulgar broadsheets, advertisements, playing cards, and anonymous popular hymns. In parody, Hone saw a literary genre where the boundaries between high and low literature had been undermined for centuries—a form of expression that had always been part of the demotic culture while nevertheless being practiced by the cultural elite. Parody, says Hone, is an effective way of conveying "certain notions to the minds of those whom [parodists] were anxious to reform" (Three Trials, 43); it is a form of propaganda which relies on the reader's familiarity with the parodied text to convey its message in a readily available manner. Scripture, therefore, as the most widely available and recognized literary discourse in the pre-modern era (advertising is probably that of the modern era), was also the most widely parodied: "there was no practice in the annals of literature more common," says Hone, "than that of parodies on sacred or devotional writings" (Three Trials, 52).

Hone sees parody as having held a privileged position within the demotic culture: vulgar readers appropriated and parodied scriptural language as a way of making it meaningful within the context of their own traditions. Reading from a parody called a "Christmas Carol," Hone notes that it is "of that description, which the common people had been accustomed to for centuries" (Three Trials, 44). Attached to the parody

is the original carol which in itself is an unsophisticated appropriation, or parody, of the original scripture: the carol "contained verses which, to a person of the least cultivated intellect, were ridiculous; but to the lowest class of the community, who purchased these, the lowest species of literary ware, such compositions, and the ideas they conveyed, were familiar, and were not of ludicrous construction" (45). Hone makes a distinction between two cultures—the "cultivated" and the "lowest class"—but refuses to attach a moral evaluation to that distinction. What may appear ludicrous to one class of people (or criminal according to Hone's persecutors) is to another an acceptable mediation of the dominant culture's texts and ideology. Having read the carol, Hone placates the seemingly distressed Attorney General, saying "[you] need not be alarmed. It could have no effect even upon the most ignorant, and millions of copies have been circulated" (45). Hone situates himself within a parodic tradition "followed by the most venerable and respected characters this country ever produced" (29) as well as by the forgotten multitudes of subaltern writers. As Smith points out, the effect of this positioning is to contest the Crown's assertion of a "modern, monolithic language of propriety [which] disregards the republication of earlier works, the diversity of the ways in which people speak, and the continuance of traditions and values that do not accord with hegemonic ones" (185). To criminalize Hone's parodies the Crown also had to prove the existence of

unadulterated "polite" language, utterly distinct from the vernacular. By appropriating and parodying whatever texts they found, regardless of their origin, Hone and his contemporaries proved that the boundaries between high and low language were not as stable as dominant class wished them to appear.

The early nineteenth century has frequently been termed the "Golden Age" of parody, and scholars have taken special note of the work of Canning, Ellis and John Hookham Frere in the pages of the Anti-Jacobin, as well as work by Byron and Shelley. But as Marcus Wood points out, such scholars have tended to focus too narrowly on parodies of elevated literary models thus conflating the literary worth of the model with that of its travesty (Radical Satire,11). This accident of canonical prejudice has meant that vast numbers of parodies, appropriating everything from throne speeches, to advertisements, to public ceremonies and last words from the gallows, have been ignored. We have forgotten, then, that in the burgeoning publishing industry of the nineteenth century, parody was an ubiquitous practice; it occupied a vital position in the popular culture extending far beyond its practice amongst the literati. As print media became more available to increasing numbers of readers, so an increasing amount of material was available for appropriation: the formation of reading audiences with access to daily news in the print media ensured that parodists and their readers shared a common knowledge both of the day's events and the

original materials that had been appropriated. "Parody," says Wood, "could, and in the prolific world of popular publishing *it did*, absorb anything that came its way" (Radical Satire, 11). Moreover, there was a ready and appreciative audience available for its consumption. It is not appropriate, then, to treat early nineteenth century parody simply as a literary device, a minor subcategory of satire: parody was a *cultural* practice, and in the possession of lower-class subjects it became a powerful tool of resistance to the cultural elite.

Just as Klancher suggests that rhetoric had become "theoretically indefensible" by the end of the eighteenth century, so satire had become something of an embarrassment to the middle classes who seemed to turn their attention away from the public and towards the personal in their choice of reading material (Elkin, 127). In the words of the literary patron Eliza Emmerson, satire "is an unamiable use of abilities, and often serves to destroy our better faculties and feelings" (Storey, 191). But like rhetoric, satire did not disappear from the cultural arena. It merely became associated with a different class of writers, becoming one of the primary rhetorical strategies of the radical reformers. With this change also came a change in the traditional target of satire. Politicians, publishers, lawyers and royalty still bore the brunt of the attack, but radical satirists did not seek simply to expose corruption within the system. For the radical author, the "system" itself was corrupt: radicals sought to reveal the subtle control effected by the powerful

through their use of public ceremonies, statues symbols and metaphors. Cobbett, Spence, Paine and Hone all saw language as a tool of oppression, subtly disguising the method by which the elite ruled the poor. Parody, which had been part of the demotic culture for centuries, was a readily available tool for effecting that exposure; and satire found a new social utility in its transformation into parody.

Ironically, as Steven Blakemore suggests, it was Edmund Burke who perhaps provided the radical cause with its greatest theoretical artillery (Burke and the Fall of Language, 75). Burke's extensive analysis of revolutionary language in his Reflections on the Revolution in France was intended to validate "the pleasing illusions which made power gentle and obedience liberal" (67). Authority, for Burke, elicits the willing submission of its subjects by a highly metaphorical language, a language distinguished from propaganda in that it develops over generations of "organic" growth. Power is tempered and beautified by a "sublime terror" which holds its subjects in awe so that the structures of power can be reproduced over generations. Subjects are harnessed to the will of something that is greater than the sum of its parts, whose origin is shielded from criticism by a "sacred veil" of time which validates even prescribed authority. In France, Burke saw the revolutionaries make a concerted attack on the symbolism of power which he felt was necessary to uphold an entire way of life:

> All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the super-added ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns and the understanding ratifies as necessary to cover the defects of our naked, shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation, are to be exploded as a ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated fashion. (Reflections, 67)

In its place he saw a febrile "empire of light and reason," a freedom bought at the expense of human dignity. Radicals agreed wholeheartedly with Burke: language could indeed elicit the willing submission of a people to the rule of a few. But where Burke saw a consensual stability, the radicals saw oppression. The French revolutionaries identified Latin as the language of the *Ancien Regime*, and insisted upon the use of a robust vernacular French as the only language not tainted by Old Corruption after the revolution: "The French Revolution marked a revolution in language, in which oedipal revolutionary sons revolted against the dominant father tongue of the Old Regime and liberated the vernacular mother tongue in the war against the Old Regime's linguistic tyranny" (Blakemore, 80). In England, Cobbett , Paine, and their radical colleagues borrowed their political strategies from the revolutionaries. They held the old symbols and language of the aristocracy in a similar distrust and made it their work to deflate the tropes of a ruling elite. Paine, for instance, takes on the crown as the symbolic residence of the right to declare war or peace. "In England," he says, "this right is said to reside in a metaphor, shown at the Tower for six-pence or a shilling a-piece...any inanimate

metaphor is no more than a hat or a cap" (Rights of Man, 69). Like the revolutionaries in France, Cobbett formulated a dichotomy between parliamentary, or aristocratic, language and the language of "the people." According to Gilmartin, Cobbett saw the government's restriction on the free press as a confession that the government could only uphold its power through an elaborate fraud, a fraud that would give way to the honest language of the vulgar classes. In an attempt to circumvent a language he sees as corrupt, Cobbett "distinguishes his own writing from prevailing falsehood, and from the 'tropes and figures' that are the language of corrupt power, by packing it with 'facts,' documents, statistics, and records. The result is an unmediated language, beyond dissent or debate" ("Victims," 90). Those who remembered Hone praised " 'the pure Saxon English' of Hone and Cobbett," (Hackwood, 336) and linked his mastery of the vernacular with an honesty of heart.

The formulation of a discrete, vernacular language that belonged solely to the people, was but one strategy of resistance to the linguistic hegemony of the dominant classes. A second was to expose the latent oppressiveness of language itself. Language, for radical authors, was a thing to be wrestled with until it gave up its hidden meanings and disguised assumptions, and parody was ideal for such a task. Hone took the most familiar and seemingly innocent texts from his culture and, by parodying them, exposed the ideological assumptions present in them. In her analysis of the

"Political House that Jack Built," Michèle Paris first looks at the structure of the original children's rhyme to explain Hone's appropriation of it. (Paris' article has no English translation and I paraphrase her work extensively). Paris explicates the rhyme as a series of alternating positive and negative events—minor subversions of the social order which are rectified at the next level in the rhyme. When the rat spoils the malt it suffers retribution from the cat. When the cat is worried by the dog, the dog suffers retribution from the cow. At the pinnacle of the hierarchy the "priest all shaven and shorn" validates the transgressive kiss between the "maiden all forlorn" and the "man all tattered and torn" by marrying them under his authority. The entire social hierarchy depends, finally, upon the "farmer sowing his corn," since it is his rooster that wakes the priest, so he can marry the man, so he can kiss the maiden, so she can milk the cow....Paris suggests, then, that the rhyme has an ideological purpose. If the farmer were not prepared to uphold the entire hierarchy on his shoulders, it would all collapse; the rhyme affirms the maxim that it is the working poor who are most happy in society because it is they who are most important to it ("The Political House," 76). The function of the original rhyme is to "furnish the child, at an age when its sensibilities are being formed, with a fixed schema that permits him to understand, or to structure, the outside world" (76). When Hone parodies the rhyme he has a double intention. The first is simply to use a familiar text

as means of conveying a political message in a readily understood fashion. The second, however, is to expose the hidden ideology of the original text, and to illustrate the implications of that ideology for the labouring poor who occupy the "farmer's" willing position of submission. The stable hierarchy of the original rhyme depends upon the willing submission of the poor to their fate, but more importantly, it depends upon a routine, violent assertion of the social order whenever that order is threatened (the rat, cat and dog are all injured or killed in turn). In Hone's parody, the dandyish Prince Regent, "all shaven and shorn,/ All cover'd with Orders—and all forlorn," occupies the same position as the Priest. But whereas the Priest presides over a marriage, the Regent supports the "Reasons of Lawless Power" as they slaughter peaceable demonstrators at Peterloo. The marriage is supplanted by a slaughter, and the stable society of the original rhyme is revealed as violently coercive in Hone's "translation" of it.

Cruickshank's illustration of the slaughter at Peterloo (fig. 2) depicts it as an assault on the family, the very institution which forms the central relationship of the original "House that Jack Built." In the background, Yeomanry Cavalry swing their sabres at a prone woman who protects her child with her body. Strewn around her are the bodies of other children and their dead mothers. In the foreground a weeping mother cradles her dead infant while a dazed and tattered father looks hopelessly and pathetically into the

distance. Next to him, however, is a man clutching his jaw in thought. The man bears a passing resemblance to Hone, but whether or not it is a portrait, the figure is the very icon of Radical self-possession and strength. The thinker's muscular stance, with his brow furrowed in thought, speaks of a rational heroism. A child clutches the man's knees and looks hopefully up at his face. The Radical, with his tattered clothes and dignified posture, stands in exact contrast to the foppish Regent who is illustrated on the previous page (fig.3). The Regent is dressed at the height of fashion, adorned with peacock's feathers, his protruding stomach suggesting an indolent life. Amongst his copious medals and badges of office is a corkscrew. Here we have the archetypal disjunction between show and substance. All the refinery of the regal costume serves only to remind the viewer of the near nakedness of the king's oppressed people. Interestingly, in a loyal riposte to Hone's pamphlet there appears a flattering portrait of the king, who is much slimmer, and wears only one medal on his chest (fig.4). Removing all the badges of office from the king, the illustrator thus suggests that the king's authority lies "in the man," and not in the symbols of his power. Cruickshank's illustration suggests a failure of authority to uphold its traditional responsibility, as the "father" of the state. Unlike the benign social order of the children's rhyme—which ensures the continuance of family bonds—the social oppression depicted in Hone's parody destroys the basic relationships

upon which a society is based.

The impulse to appropriate was present in Hone's work long before he began to publish parodies. One of Hone's most powerful and brutally sarcastic pieces of rhetoric was his second "Letter to the Readers of Mr. Cobbett's Weekly Political Pamphlet," written shortly after Cobbett's emigration to America. Hone quotes a single paragraph from an article in the Times. Written at the end of the war, when the demand for labour was in decline, the article describes the labouring poor in the coldly industrial metaphors of the day as if they were surplus commodities: "You cannot *warehouse your people*. They are *hungry articles* which must be regularly *oiled*, whether idle or in action. They may ***ROT*** *at last*; but they will *ferment before they rot*, and burst their repository, and burn your habitations" (Hone's emphases) (Register, Vol.1, no.11). Each part of the offensive analogy is printed in italic typeface as if to cause the reader to catch himself on words that might otherwise have slipped by his notice. The one marked for his most outraged invective is the one most clearly marked: the word ROT. "Is our ROTTING to be a thing talked of to our very faces, by a public newspaper?" asks Hone. "Mark the language," says Hone as he recapitulates for a second time the offensive paragraph: "They (that is we), may **ROT** at last... [etc.]". Hone forces the reader to focus on the paragraph and to position himself as the "they" referred to. Hone seems to translate each and every word for their benefit:

> Why, what does the *Times* mean? Ferment *before* we **ROT**? What *ferment*, and **ROT** afterwards! What does the *Times* mean? '*Burn* your habitations.' *Whose* habitations, and *for what*?

Hone feigns a mock confusion, playing with the sound of the phrase "ferment before we rot," inflecting it differently each time as if the words did not quite make sense. Obsessively questioning the meaning of each word, Hone renders them almost meaningless. In laboriously translating the passage, Hone estranges the reader from its language, thus supposing that the reader speaks a different language all together. This strategy was not unique to Hone: Cobbett frequently positioned himself as a "translator" of the dominant culture's language to his readers. In his last "Political Register" before fleeing England, Cobbett wrote about the recent usage of the word "Peasantry" by the land-owning class.

> [The laboring people] are called, now-a-days, by these gentlemen, 'the *Peasantry*.' This is a new term as applied to Englishmen. It is a French word, which in its literal sense, means *Country Folks*. But, in the sense, in which it is used in France and Flanders and Germany, it means, not only country folks, but also a *distinct and degraded class of persons* (6).

Cobbett literally translates the word "Peasantry" back into the French "Paisant," but he also explicates its meaning within the English context. An imported word, newly "applied to Englishmen," it carries the suggestion of political invasion. It is a demeaning word, and its use implies a change in the traditionary relationship between the land-owning and laboring classes. With the imported word, comes an imported ideology, and the "freeborn" Englishman succumbs to

a French political structure in which the laboring poor are "kept down in their proper place" (6). In the Reformist Register, Hone similarly focuses his attention on a single word that betrays the user's ideology. The word ROT and its derivatives is finally used a total of eighteen times, accumulating until becomes almost unbearable to hear it any more:

> I pray the *Times* not to use that word. **ROT!** a living being, a man, or a woman, or a child, **ROT!** I don't like this supposition about **ROTTING ALIVE**. I hate the very mention of it....I wish the *Times* had said nothing about **ROTTING**....we must not hear of **ROTTING**...for those of us who are so far advanced towards starvation as to be near **ROTTING**, something should instantly be done—*instantly*—**INSTANTLY**.

The word, dropped almost accidentally by the writer of the article in the Times, is seized by Hone who squeezes every last implication out of it. With mock naiveté, Hone understands the word "rot" as denotative rather than metaphorical, suggesting that anyone who could imagine such a horrific fate as **ROTTING ALIVE** to befall a "man, or a woman, or a child" would instantly come to their aid, or admit being less than human. Thus, Hone "re-attaches" the signified to the sign, and places the metaphor back into the context of reality.

In his "Rights of Infants" Thomas Spence imagined a peasant woman using the very words of her aristocratic interlocutor to prove her argument; similarly Hone condemned one of his favourite victims "out of his own mouth" in the parody titled "Buonapartephobia." John Stoddart, nicknamed "Dr. Slop" by Hone, wrote infamously bombastic prose for the

Times, directing particularly vicious invective at Napoleon. Hone went through Stoddart's columns and lifted dozens of these insults which he then placed *verbatim* in an extensive parodic diatribe by Dr. Slop. It is the cumulative effect of the language that is effective, but a small sample gives a sense of the whole:

> that *Traitor*! that *Corsican* Traitor! that *audacious* Traitor! that *cowardly and perfidious* Traitor! that *perjured* Traitor! that *Arch* Traitor!—a *Rebel*! an *audacious* Rebel! a *vile Corsican* Rebel! an *usurping* Rebel! a *proscribed* Rebel! an *infamous* Rebel! the *Arch* Rebel! the Rebel *who defies* ALL EUROPE! (Buonapartephobia)

This goes on, almost unbroken, for three pages. Slop says nothing that Stoddart did not actually say and the cumulative effect of this crude language is devastating. Stoddart becomes a mere name-caller, and his repetitious invective, suggesting an incapacity even to generate witty or original insults, is reduced to almost meaningless bluster. Hone organized the insults by noun—"Traitor," "Rebel" "Villain," "Corsican," "Usurper," "Tyrant," "Despot," "Robber," etc.—and each noun goes through a cycle of adjectives, most of which are repeated several times. Napoleon becomes a "Perjurer," a "*perjured* Villain," a "*perjured* Corsican," a "*perjured* Traitor," a "*perjured* Usurper" who is supported by a "*perjured* crew" (all emphases are Hone's.) The pamphlet, which is subtitled "Cursing Made Easy to the Meanest Capacity," is introduced as a parody of instruction and conduct manuals, or of the increasingly more popular vocabulary books which were aimed at the self-educated lower

classes. The pamphlet demonstrates "the Doctor's VOCABULARY of Easy EPITHETS...shewing HOW TO NICKNAME AND CURSE NAPOLEON, to the best advantage, upon all occasions...for the use of men, women, and children of all Ranks and Conditions." The epithets are arranged in an organized fashion, each epithet being followed by a number of its permutations. It is as if Hone, through Dr. Slop, was demonstrating the proper usage of epithets in a grammatical context. He thereby mockingly suggests a linguistic system at work--one which overturns the conventional assumption that the powerful speakers of language also speak "properly." Radicals like Cobbett turned to the acquisition of proper grammar as a way of improving their social status, since they saw language as one of the primary means of class manipulation: "Cobbett considered grammar...as an integral part of the class structure in England, and the act of learning grammar...as an act of class warfare" (Smith, 1). But in learning the grammar of their social superiors--however subversive that act of appropriation was--radicals made a tacit admission that their own discourse was inadequate and thereby inadvertently validated the presumption that a particular kind of linguistic expertise could denote public worthiness. Hone made a significant challenge to this assumption by attacking his social superiors as speakers. In a carnivalesque inversion of social expectations Hone mocked the linguistic expertise of the powerful, exposing them, as he did with Dr. Slop, as crudely incapable of speaking properly.

In a consummate piece of irony, Cobbett included in his Cobbett's English Grammar an analysis of the Prince Regent's speech to parliament of November 8, 1814. Entitled "Errors and Nonsense in a King's Speech," Cobbett analyses the speech sentence by sentence and concludes "in the whole speech, not one single sentence...is free from error" (183). As he combs through the speech he renders it into a jumble of confusion and meaningless references. Like Hone's examination of the Time's use of the word "rot," Cobbett asks again and again "what does he mean?" (180). Whether or not the speech was understood by its audience, in Cobbett's hands it becomes almost completely meaningless. Cobbett points out that there are at least nine high-ranking officials at hand, from the Lord High Chancellor to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to write and edit a speech by the king; he thus inculpates a significant proportion of the cabinet in the king's grammatical travesty. As Smith has stated, Cobbett saw grammar as one of the aristocracy's primary means of manipulating the poor since they equated grammatical competence with social authority. Logos, by extension, resides with the king; but Cobbett essentially inverts the linguistic hierarchy, and, to borrow a coinage from Blakemore, commits logocide.

The speech by the Prince Regent is the same one that Hone parodies in his "Man in the Moon." The dreaming narrator of the pamphlet takes an imaginary trip to the moon where he encounters a society in which he sees "all things exactly, to

a hair, agreeing" (Rickword, 87) with the world he has just left. The Prince of Lunitaria is, by chance, about to give his address to parliament. In the accompanying illustration by Cruickshank (fig.5), the Prince is barely hidden from view in his carriage surrounded by soldiers on horseback, with all the accompanying pageantry and crowds. The only thing to identify the Lunitarian Prince with the earthly Prince Regent, is a coy bouquet of peacock's feathers sprouting from the top of the carriage—Cruickshank's favorite symbol of the foppish Regent. On the next page is an ironically contrasting portrait of the earthly Regent (fig.6). He is fully visible, carried past an outhouse on a wooden chair by Castlereagh and Sidmouth, his feathers tattered and drooping. Only a honking goose is present to notice his passage. The pamphlet is an example of one of Hone's and Cruickshank's best collaborations, the illustrations providing a meaningful context and ironic commentary on the text. The sarcastic narrator begins by describing the Regent's speech: "Oh! could the Muse relate the '*elegance*,' the sweet '*distinctiveness*,'/ With which his Royal Deyship did address/ That reverend body of Moonarian sages/...Alas! such heights are not for me to reach" (Rickword, 88). The speech itself is, of course, utterly childish: "My Lords and Gentlemen,/ I grieve to say,/ That poor old Dad,/ Is just as—bad,/ As when I met you here/ the other day" (89). Hone's parody subverts the deliberate circumlocution of the original opening "My Lords and Gentlemen, It is with deep regret that I am again obliged to

announce the continuance of his Majesty's lamented indisposition" (Cobbett's English, 178). As the speech progresses, Cruickshank's illustrations provide an ironic exposé of the actual meaning of the words being spoken. Speaking of the starvation of his people the Lunitarian Prince says: "though the Radicals may still want food,/ A few STEEL LOZENGES/ will stop their pain" (Rickword, 94). Steel Lozenges were a popular medicinal confectionery, taken especially to ease the pain of sore throats. The bolded and capitalized "STEEL LOZENGES," however, provides a caption for the illustration above it: soldiers are ramming steel bayonets and swords down the throats of reform demonstrators (fig.7). The same device is used when the Prince refers to "our most HOLY COMPACT AND ALLIANCE" (95) with foreign powers. The illustration (fig.8) shows a catholic bishop and priest dancing with the devil, several soldiers, and the Prince Regent (drawn from behind with his face hidden.) The dancers encircle a burning printing press to which "Liberty" has been tied. The Prince's words, then, are fraught with hidden meanings and sinister intentions. Not only is his language childishly incompetent, but it is also imbued with disguised menace. Each word holds a double meaning, and Hone and Cruickshank expose that duplicity.

In the introduction to his satire of John Stoddart, Hone somewhat arrogantly claimed that "the exposure was so effectual, that the Doctor was, in a few days, dismissed from that paper" ("Buonopartephobia"). Stoddart was, as Hone

gloatingly recounts, dismissed from the Times for his "virulence and indiscretion" (Times, Feb., 1817), and was publicly denounced in that very paper. But it is more likely that Stoddart owed his dismissal to the increasing unpopularity of his prose than to the effects of Hone's single pamphlet. Nevertheless, Hone's claim is important. Radical authors felt they were engaged in a battle of signs; public symbols of power—manifested in statuary, clothing, incidental music, medals, public speeches and processions (Wood, 14)—were seen as the techniques by which power awed its subjects into obeisance. In subverting those symbols, radicals felt they were making material differences to their political reality. Seeking proof of the effectiveness of their campaign, radicals frequently claimed to have discovered material evidence of their work. In his Rural Rides Cobbett saw evidence that the working people were adopting his ideas all over the English countryside, demonstrating an egotism that was common to many radicals: "The Rural Rides," says Kevin Gilmartin, "create an egocentric universe. All political good proceeds from the Rider and returns to him" ("Victims," 93). When Cobbett encounters a peasant family who seem to have adopted Cobbett's farming methods, his reaction is unabashedly immodest: "It is I, who, without knowing them, without ever having seen them, without even knowing their names, have given the means of good living to a family who were before half-starved. This is indisputably my work" (Rural Rides,

186). Hone made similar assertions of his power as an author when he claims to have ruined John Stoddart by naming him "Dr. Slop." In the "Political Showman-At Home!" Hone created a political bestiary in which prominent public figures were envisioned as dangerous animals on display. "The animals may make an *uproar*, but don't be alarmed," says the narrator, "Remember they are *under my control*, and cannot take a step beyond the reach of MY EYE" ("Political Showman"). Cruickshank's illustration shows a huge eye in the position of the sun with a printing press reflected in its pupil. Underneath it corrupt public figures cower in fear as they brandish useless weapons. Like the Augustan satirists, the radical parodist, represented by a free press, positions himself at the apex of society and makes grandiose claims for his political might. Stoddart is rhetorically imprisoned by Hone's threat to reprint his damming pamphlet as long as "Dr. Slop" keeps active as a publisher:

> It is my intention to reprint it in lasting shape, from time to time, and so long as the Doctor daily empties his *night-slush* from his *Slop-pail*. By virtue of my public authority, I hereby ratify and confirm his right and title to the name of "SLOP;" and, it is my parodial will and pleasure, that he continue to *bear* it during his natural life. ("Buonopartephobia").

Hone adopts an ironic public voice, "by virtue of my public authority," and mockingly situates himself in a position of power—a position which he can only claim on a textual level. The normal speaker of this kind of public discourse would have in his words the power to confer a title or honour upon another, thus inducting that person into a realm of privilege

and power. Naming, or the dispensing of titles, is directly linked with the conferring of power. Paine described such naming, and the pomp that accompanied it, as if it were a childish game of dress-up:

> Titles are but nicknames, and every nickname is a title....It is, properly, from the elevated mind of France, that the folly of titles has been abolished. It has outgrown the baby-clothes of "count" and "duke," and breeched itself in manhood....The insignificance of a senseless word like "duke," "count," or "earl," has ceased to please. Even those who possessed them, have disowned the gibberish, and, as they outgrew the rickets, have despised the rattle. (Rights of Man, 70).

Paine figures the signs of authority, its titles and offices, as a "language," but it is a language he reduces to "gibberish." Those titles, which to Burke conveyed such awesome weight, become meaningless, and discardable when it is realized that "titles are but nicknames, and every nickname is a title." Appropriately, Hone's nickname for Stoddart is conferred to him as a title: "I hereby confirm and ratify his right and title to the name of "**SLOP**." Dispensing his "Parodial will and pleasure" Hone suggests that one title is like another, whether it is a title conferred by a Baron or a Parodist.

In her analysis of joking, Susan Purdie looks at the power structures inherent in any joking exchange. Like Smith, Purdie connects social power to linguistic expertise. "The capacity to joke," she says, "is connected with possession of that 'proper' language which commands full subjectivity, for it is that full subjectivity which patriarchy consistently denies to women, and by extension, to its other abjected

groups" (Comedy: the Mastery of Discourse, 128). That subjectivity, as we have already seen, is one denied to subaltern speakers who, lacking a particular linguistic expertise, were assumed in the nineteenth century to be unsuitable participants in the public sphere. This is not to say that joking is only done by the socially powerful. As Easthope says, subjectivity is the effect, not the origin of discourse, and writers or jokers alike can position themselves as powerful speakers regardless of their material circumstances. "Jokers first of all constitute themselves as 'proper speakers' and so as the properly powerful; when the joking has targets, these become the objects of the joking subject's speech, and the jokers take upon themselves the right to define the *nature* of their objects" (129). In both Spence's and Hone's parodies, the "proper" speakers of language—those for whom power is equated with linguistic competence—are exposed as fraudulent. Stoddart becomes a blustering fool, while Hone can take pleasure in doubly empowering himself as a speaker: first, in exposing Stoddart's incompetence as a speaker, and second, by arrogating to himself the power of naming.

Radicals "expropriated" public identities by forging a relatively unified system of allusions, icons and symbols in which they represented their opponents. Particular verbal and visual tropes were attached to political figures and they remained surprisingly enduring. In his "Political Showman—At Home!", Hone and Cruickshank created what Thompson calls a

radical demonology (Making, 661). The pamphlet, punningly advertised as a "cabinet of curiosities and Creatures," is a parody of a barker's freak show and bestiary routine. The "showman" himself is a centaur-like fusion between man and printing-press (fig. 9). Public figures, some real and some stereotyped, are lined up as the objects of show and each is associated with the symbols which Hone and Cruickshank had been ascribing them for years: "the CURIOSITIES," says the advertisement, "have *labels* under them, which the company can read." The pamphlet is almost a iconographic history of Hone's and Cruickshank's satire. Stoddart is figured with his slop-pail, the symbol of his "New Times." Castlereagh's head is affixed to the hilt of a bloody sword while he flails the air with his whip. The whip was a reference to Castlereagh's reputed acceptance of torture in Ireland. Similar to Castlereagh, Sidmouth's head is bizzarely perched on top of an enema bag, a reference to his father's origins as a humble village doctor (figs. 10,11,12). (Rather endearingly, Hackwood prudishly refers to the clyster bag as an "infant's feeding bottle," pg. 221). So overwhelming is the radical iconography that each figure becomes represented almost entirely by his associated symbol. Hone's opponents are literally disembodied as Cruickshank creates strange hybrids out of men, animals and instruments of torture.

The sheer consistency with which these representations occur throughout Hone's and Cruickshank's long collaboration made it impossible for their opponents to disassociate

themselves from their caricatures. They could only retaliate by creating their own anti-radical iconography which, for the most part, had none of the wit or flair of that created by Hone and Cruickshank. Typical of the anti-radical effort were depictions of Cobbett carrying Thomas Paine's bones back from America: Cobbett did, in fact, re-inter Paine's corpse in Britain after he died in America. T.J. Wooler always appears as a deformed black dwarf, a characterization which was not terribly effective since Wooler created the character in the first place for his weekly "Black Dwarf." The anti-radicals could neither disassociate themselves from the images radicals created for them, nor could they respond in a more "elevated" style. Edgell Rickword's book, Radical Squibs and Loyal Ripostes, is a collection of radical parodies and their anti-radical responses, and it demonstrates just how effective the radical parodies were. Faced with the enormous popularity of parodies like Hone's "Political House," loyalists could only re-appropriate their formats and invest them with insipid anti-radical sentiments. Appended to "The Political House" is a satire, written in the same style as the nursery rhyme, entitled "The Clerical Magistrate." It shows a Janus-faced priest, "made according to law," who on one side preaches from the pulpit, and from the other passes sentence on criminals from the Bench (fig.13). He is shown holding a gallows, a whip, a gun and manacles in one hand and a cross in the other: "'Gainst his spiritual Oath," says the rhyme, "put his Oath of the Bench,/ And, instead of his

Bible,/ Examines a wench" (Rickword, 56). An anonymous loyalist rewrites the parody: "This is a Priest, made according to Truth,/ The guide of Old Age—/ The Instructor of Youth/ Belov'd and respected by all whom he teaches,/ Himself the example of all that he preaches" (Rickword, 80). The illustration shows a kindly old gentleman clutching his Bible (fig. 14), and has been identified as a portrait of Rowland Hill, an itinerant preacher (Rickword, 313). The loyalist pamphlet is completely lacking in humor, and even its illustrations of popular radicals are straightforward portraits rather than caricatures. The entire parody is nothing more than an attempt to recuperate the images and names of the political elite, using flattering portraits and encomiums. So powerful was the radical demonology, that loyalists had to distribute realistic portraits of Hone's and Cruickshank's victims, almost as if to remind the public of what their leaders actually looked like.

Hone's prediction that John Stoddart would continue to "*bear*" the nickname "Dr. Slop," was entirely accurate. Stoddart himself was forced to re-appropriate the name and the title of the squib in which it had been immortalized: Stoddart belittled Hone by suggesting that his fame was entirely a consequence of his collaboration with Cruickshank in a parody entitled "Slop's Slap at a Broken Hone." Just as Hone mocked Stoddart's blustrous language, so Stoddart questioned Hone's skill as a satirist: "who, in fits at Cruicky's drole designs,/ can stay to criticize lop-sided

lines" (Wood, 235). This is perhaps the most significant element of radical parody—that it forces retaliation on its own terms. Parody undermined the assumption of a stable linguistic hierarchy as its users obsessively appropriated the words of their political enemies and turned them to their own use. In this battle of signs, the political and cultural elite made sporadic attempts to suppress radical speakers, and even after Hone's trials they succeeded for a time. But the radicals achieved a real victory by divesting of their authority the language and signs of the cultural elite. Completely overturning the expected socio-linguistic hierarchy, radical parodists became, in a certain sense, the originators of language.

Conclusion:

Why Hone?

Whenever the name of a mostly forgotten literary figure is resurrected in later years, two questions become immediately relevant: why was he forgotten? and why should he be remembered now? Hone was a prominent figure in the early nineteenth-century political and literary scene, but his fame largely died with him in 1842. It is not particularly surprising that this was the case: for the greater part of this century Hone has not been the kind of writer favored by students of the English literary canon. This study has not been an attempt to redress that possible wrong; my approach to Hone's work has tended to obviate the need for evaluation. Rather, I have been looking at Hone as part of a cultural phenomenon, and at his writing as a new kind of cultural practice in the nineteenth-century public sphere. I have bracketed a small part of an enormous cultural movement in an attempt to gain some understanding of how it was that a working-class representational discourse emerged by the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Despite his undisputed popularity in the first three decades of the nineteenth century—not to mention his several dramatic confrontations with authority—only one biography of Hone exists, written in 1912 by Charles Hackwood. In recent years, Marcus Wood is the only scholar to have written a book-length critical study of Hone's work (Radical Satire and

Popular Culture), and Olivia Smith has treated the Three Trials relatively extensively in her book, the Politics of Language. Occasionally, Hone makes appearences in books by historians of politics and popular culture[1]. His association with the radical reform movement has sometimes made him more of a political than a literary figure, despite the fact that he wrote very little in the way of political theory, and—apart from a brief association with the London Corresponding Society in his teens—he had few ties to political organizations. He has been placed, therefore, somewhere on the periphery of the struggle for democracy, an occasional voice in the general melée, but one lacking the rhetorical effectiveness of Cobbett, or the widespread influence of Paine. By the early 1830's, Hone had almost entirely withdrawn from political scuffles, seeing politics as incommensurate with a religious life (Hackwood, 236). In his later years he even seemed shocked at the gains he himself had helped the working classes to attain: after the Reform Bill had passed, he expressed the opinion that "the Government, like Frankenstein, [had] raised a monster they could not tame" (Hackwood, 301). As a political figure, then, Hone lacked the single-minded conviction of his more famous contemporaries, and his visible involvement in radical politics lasted for only slightly more than a decade. By the time he died in 1842, Hone was something of a has-been: the

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[1] E.P. Thompson, Ian Macalman, and Edward Royle all deal with Hone, perhaps necessarily, in a relatively cursory fashion

characters and events that filled his satires were already historically obsolete, and his reformist politics had already been surpassed by the proponents of Chartism.

Hone has had only slightly better luck as a subject of literary study in the last century. Students of English literature have all but forgotten an author whose fame depended upon his derisive analysis of fleeting events and forgotten officials on the political stage. Casual students of the period have little knowledge of the ephemeral events and characters that form the substance of Hone's work, and much of his humour is lost to them. The seemingly arcane iconography which he and Cruickshank developed between them requires an intimate knowledge of nineteenth-century political personalities, and the parodies prove to be stubbornly resistant to traditional approaches of critical reading. Hone's work is entirely dependent on its immediate cultural context: once divorced from the context in which it was written, it offers little that resonates with a modern audience.

Literary criticism has historically lacked the tools for dealing with a writer as diverse as Hone, a significant part of whose work involved the collaboration of other artists, or the appropriation of their work. Hone was a *bricoleur* of language, and his works are sometimes bewildering assemblages of disparate literary sources, so that it is difficult even to apply traditional notions of authorship to him. Impossible to categorize, Hone occupied a position in the literary

world, according to Smith, "too anomalous, too contradictory for either himself or others to sustain" (176).

Perhaps the simplest reason for Hone's omission from literary memory is that he simply did not have the talent to sustain a readership beyond his immediate life-time. Hone was incredibly inventive and had a knack for overstated irony, but he was not, in fact, a particularly memorable writer. Like any political commentator today, he wrote for the moment and not for posterity, even if he was a meticulous reviser of his own work (Hackwood, 336). Though his publications were extremely popular in his day, it must be admitted that much of Hone's fame came from his life-long partnership with George Cruickshank (Wood, 235), one of the most gifted illustrators and caricaturists of the day. A single Cruickshank print today will cost several hundred dollars regardless of whether or not it is attached to one of Hone's texts, and rarely does Hone's talent as a writer match that of Cruickshank's as an illustrator.

Given his admittedly peripheral status in English literary history, why should Hone be a subject of study now? To a certain extent, the larger issue in this study has been why people read and write in the first place; this is a question that seems almost irrelevant now, but which had tremendous importance for Hone's generation, which was among the first for whom literacy was widely attainable. The ability to speak grammatically, and the ability to read and to write, was for Hone and his contemporaries a thing more

powerful than any weapon in their struggle for political and cultural enfranchisement. The almost clichéd image that is the frontispiece of "The Political House that Jack Built" is representative of what, for Hone, was a political truth: Wellington is tossing his sword on to one side of a set of scales already laden with oppressive anti-speech acts, while on the other side, far outweighing the former, is a quill pen.

As entertaining as Hone is to read, then, he essentially provides me with a convenient armature upon which to build a partial answer to that question, why do people read and write? The purpose of this paper has not been to recuperate Hone as a non-canonical writer, although I believe he might merit such an attempt. It has been an attempt to situate a relatively typical, if unusually successful, nineteenth-century writer and publisher in his own cultural context. Hone is interesting, not for how his work affects us now, but for how his work affected his audience then. I have attempted to shift the focus away from the text and on to the practice of writing itself: to paraphrase an earlier statement, Hone was less engaged in the *art* of writing than he was in the *act* of writing.

When Thompson says, then, that the working class was "making itself" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was publishers and writers like Hone who helped to forge the discourse in which such self-representation became possible. Identifying language as both the tool of

their oppression and the key to their freedom, early radicals became superb manipulators of their linguistic environment. Hone is important because he is a typical contributor to an extraordinary movement: he is representative of a generation of radical writers who more-or-less adopted the same strategies of appropriation and resistance, becoming obsessively self-conscious users of language. By simultaneously subverting the sociolect of the dominant classes, and bringing a truculent working-class vernacular into the public sphere from which they had been excluded, Hone and his contemporaries rhetorically enfranchised themselves as public citizens.

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Appendix

Fig. 1 ("The Political House tha
Jack Built." Rickword, 51).

Fig. 2 ("The Political House that
Jack Built." Rickword, 46).

Fig. 3 ("The Political House that Jack Built." Rickword, 44).

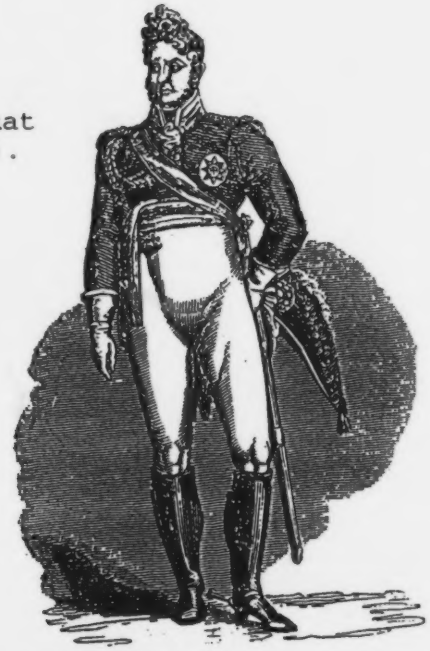
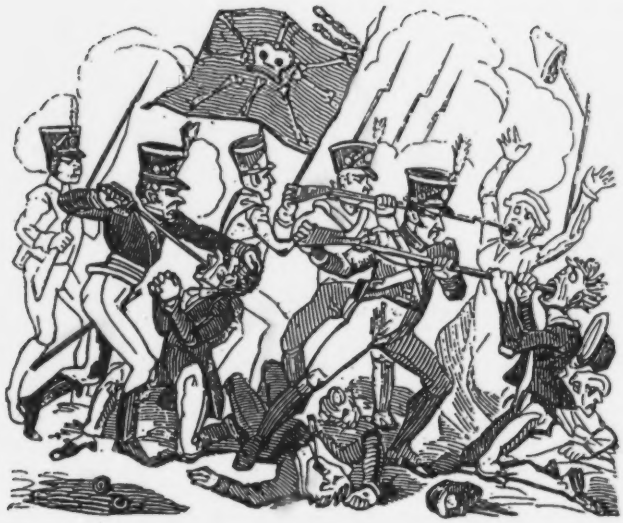


Fig. 4 ("The Real or Constituitional House that Jack Built." Rickword, 76).



STEEL LOZENGES

Fig. 7 ("The Man in the Moon." Rickword, 94).

HOLY COMPACT AND ALLIANCE,

Fig. 8 ("The Man in the Moon." Rickword, 95).

Fig. 5 ("The Man in the Moon." Rickword, 86).

Fig. 6 ("The Man in the Moon." Rickword, 88).

Fig. 9 ("The Political Showman—At Home!" Rickword, 271).

Fig. 10 ("The Political Showman—At Home!" Rickword, 293).

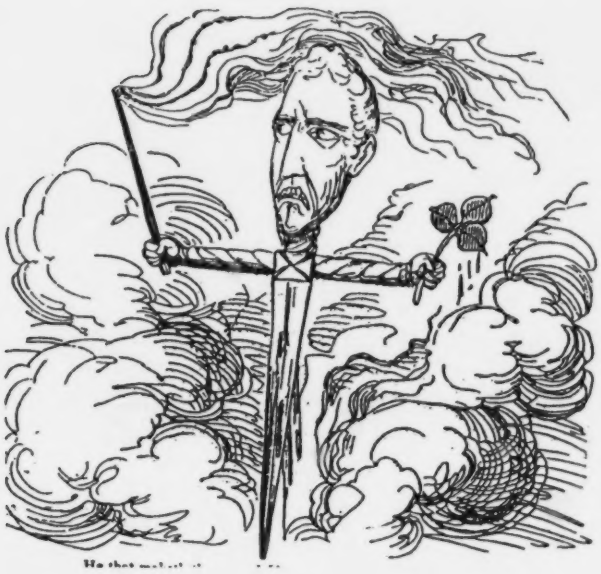


Fig. 11 ("The Political Showman—At Home!" Rickword, 288).

Fig. 12 ("The Political Showman—At Home!" Rickword, 290).

THE CLERICAL MAGISTRATE.

Fig. 13 ("The Political House that Jack Built." Rickword, 55).

Fig. 14 ("The Real or Constitutional House that Jack Built." Rickword, 80).